

Ibn Taymiyyah and Sufism

(Translator's foreword: Below is the first part of the sixth chapter of the incomplete yet ongoing translation of Shaykh 'Abd al-Hafiz's Mawqif A'immat al-Harakat al-Salafiyyah min al-Tasawwuf wa al-Sufiyyah. In this chapter, the author, a student and khalifah of Shaykh al-Hadith Mawlana Muhammad Zakariyya al-Kandhalawi, produces a series of excerpts from the writings of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah that demonstrate the positive manner by which the shaykh regarded Sufism and the Sufis. However, before that, Shaykh 'Abd al-Hafiz cites excerpts from the writings of a number of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah's contemporaries and also academics of the present era who support the view that he was a shaykh of Tasawwuf. Shaykh 'Abd al-Hafiz writes:)

Before we begin citing various quotations from the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah from his numerous books, we shall firstly present a number of extracts from a lengthy letter written by one of his great students, Shaykh 'Imad al-Din ibn Shaykh al-Hazamiyyin. We shall then cite a few sections from four poems composed to mourn the death of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah by his students and admirers from which it becomes clear that he was, according to them, a *shaykh* of Tariqah and *imam* of Tasawwuf on the level of being a *qutub* in this field, in addition to his being an *imam* in other religious fields and an expert in various sciences and disciplines. We shall follow this by portions from the writings of some contemporary researchers who have explicitly mentioned Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah's firm connection to Tasawwuf and the Sufi *shaykhs*, may Allah have mercy on them. We shall thereafter, *insha-Allah*, quote his writings from his various books.

The Salafi Imam Hafiz Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Hadi al-Hanbali writes in his book *Al-'Uqud al-Durriyyah min Manaqib Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah* (published by *Matba'h al-Madani*, Cairo), P. 192:

His (Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah's) total absence from Damascus was seven years and seven weeks.^[1] During the *shaykh's* absence from Damascus, many of his great companions and masters passed away. Among them was the *shaykh*, the *imam*, the exemplar, the ascetic, the knower of Allah, 'Imad al-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Wasiti, who was popularly known as Ibn Shaykh al-Hazamiyyin.^[2] He died on Saturday, 26 Rabi' al-Akhir, 711 AH. He was a pious man, abstinent, of great standing, someone who had severed himself [from the *dunya*] for Allah, and one who was great in worship and Suluk. He had written a letter which he sent to a group of the *shaykh's* companions in which he directed them to firmly remain with

the *shaykh* and encouraged them to follow his way. He praised the *shaykh* greatly in that. This is a copy of the letter that he wrote:

An excellent letter from Shaykh ‘Imad al-Din praising Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah and advising regarding him:

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. All praise is for Allah and glory is for Allah along with His praise. Hallowed is He in His exaltedness and splendour. He is most high in all His perfect qualities (*sifat*). He is grand in the majesty of His uniqueness and beauty. He is noble in His excellent qualities and the beauty of His favours. He is beyond comparison (*tamthil*) with any of His creation or that He can be comprehended, rather He encompasses all that He has created. Minds cannot comprehend Him, bodies cannot carry Him, and nor can eyes and intellects understand the nature of His being...

Thereafter, this is a letter written by the feeble slave, he who is hopeful of the mercy of his Lord, His forgiveness, kindness and favour, Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Wasiti—may Allah treat him as he deserves for indeed He alone is worthy to be feared and obeyed (*ahl al-taqwa*) and He alone forgives sins when He so wishes (*ahl al-maghfirah*)—to his brothers for the sake of Allah, the honourable *‘ulama*, the god fearing *imams*, and the people of beneficial knowledge, humble hearts and brilliant light, those whom Allah has clothed in the garb of the followers. I am hopeful of His kindness that He asserts for them the true essence of benefitting: [They are namely] the great master, the erudite scholar, the pride of the hadith scholars, the lamp of the worshippers, he who is turned to the Lord of the Worlds, Taqi al-Din Abu Hafs ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abd al-Ahad ibn Shaqir; the great *shaykh*, the erudite scholar, the *salik*, the one with knowledge and actions, he who is dressed in the most beautiful of attire in terms of praiseworthy qualities, Shaykh Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Ahad al-Amidi ... and others from those who seek shelter in the presence of their *shaykh*, our *shaykh*, the master, the magnanimous *imam* and teacher of good, the reviver of the Sunnah, the destroyer of innovation (*bid‘ah*), the aider of hadith, the *mufti* of various denominations, he who has transcended realities and connected them to the principles of Sacred Law for the seeker who is tasting spiritual bliss (*dhawq*), he who gathered between the exoteric and the esoteric for he judges according to the truth clearly whilst his heart is dwelling with the Most High, he is from the example of the Rightly Guided Khalifahs and guided *imams* whose path became hidden from hearts and the Ummah forgot their example and way, and so the *shaykh* reminded them of that, he who treads in their obliterated ways, he is a reviver of their dead

ways, a possessor of the reins of their principles, the *shaykh*, the *imam*, Taqi al-Din Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-Halim ibn ‘Abd al-Salam ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah bring upon us his blessings (*barakah*) and raise his rank to the highest station, may He also make perpetual the divine accordance (*tawfiq*) and the correctness of those with whose mention [this letter] began, and increase for them their lot and much more.

Peace be upon you, oh brothers, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings. May Allah make us and you from among those whose hearts remain firm on the difficulties of the truth. I am hopeful of reward from Allah for that which one expends from one’s self in establishing His faith, the grief that one experiences on account of that and the treading in the path of the early predecessors from among the Migrants (Muhajris), Helpers (Ansar) and those who were unperturbed by the blame of the criticiser; those who abandoned them did not harm them nor did those who opposed them in spite of their being few in number at the beginning.

In spite of that, each of them strove hard and was firm in the faith of Allah. We have hope of the favour of Allah Most High that he grants us accordance to follow their actions, grants our hearts a portion of their spiritual states (*hal*), arranges us as beads along their thread and under their banner with their leader and *imam*, the master of the prophets, the *imam* of the pious, Muhammad, may Allah bless him, his family and companions, all of them...

It is known that people are different in their stations of love and fear; they are in a station that is loftier than the other and have a share that is greater than the other. Let the aim of each of us in relation to the stations of love and fear be the loftiest and let us not suffice except with an abundant portion of it and its apex. Low ambitions suffice with a little portion, while lofty ambitions rise with breaths close to the Beloved—that which is below it in qualities will not preoccupy us away. The intelligent will not suffice with something that is superseded by a superior [spiritual] state (*hal*). Let aspirations be divided into acquiring exoteric (*zahir*) levels and esoteric (*batin*) stations (*maqam*). It is not fair to fatigue one’s self in the exoteric and to be preoccupied in anything apart from lofty goals of brilliant lights.

Let there be for all of us during the night and day an hour in which we sit in solitude with our Lord Whose name is magnanimous and Whose hallowedness is most high, and gather our thoughts in front Him in that

hour, cast away from our hearts the preoccupations of the world and remain aloof from all that is apart from Allah for an hour of the day. By this, man will recognise his condition with his Lord. Hence, he who is of a standing with his Lord then his determination shall come into motion during that hour, his inner self will become glad on account of the love and exaltedness, and his breathing and secrets will hasten to that which is lofty. These hours are examples of the situation of the slave in his grave when he will become devoid of his wealth and its love. He who does not vacate his heart for an hour of the day—which would drive him away from worldly thoughts and people of sin—then know that he is not of any lofty connection, nor does he have a portion of love or being the beloved. Let him cry over his self; he should in respect to it only be pleased with being close to his Lord and being intimate with Him.

If those hours are acquired for Allah's sake, then it is possible to realise the five prayers in their [proper] mode of having presence of mind (*hudur*), humbleness (*khushu'*) and awe for the Lord Most High in prostration (*sujud*) and bowing (*ruku'*).

It is not proper for us that we become niggardly on ourselves in setting aside one hour for Allah Most High during the twenty-four hours of the day and night in which we may worship Him as He ought to be and then strive in realising the obligatory acts (*fard*) according to a way that is in due accord for Him. This is the path of us all that we have to, *insha-Allah Ta'ala*, pass. Hence, the jurist who has not traversed this path has acquired, through his knowledge, the exoteric (*zahir*) portion and missed the esoteric (*batin*) portion due to his heart being characterised with hardness and due to his being far, when worshipping and reciting [the Quran], from having a soft heart and flesh. It is as Allah Most High says: "*Shivered from which are the flesh of those who fear their Lord, so that their flesh and their hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah.*" (39:23)

With this (traversing the path), the jurist rises above the jurists of our era and by it becomes distinguished from them. The one who has traversed [the spiritual path] from among the jurists has enlightened sight, correct taste of spiritual bliss (*dhawq*), true insight (*firasah*) and complete knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifah*); he is a beholder over others in [understanding] correct actions and those that are wrong. He who has not traversed [the path], he will not have these specialities. He will see some things and others will remain hidden from him.

Therefore, it is determined for us all to traverse close into the presence of He Who is worshipped, to meet Him with firm conviction so we may worship Him as though we are seeing him as has come in the hadith...

You have come, my brothers, under the banner of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), *insha-Allah Ta'ala*, with your *shaykh* and *imam*, our *shaykh* and *imam* with whose mention we began—may Allah be pleased with him. You are distinct from all the people of the world—its jurists, *fuqara* and Sufis—with the correct religion.

You have recognised what innovations people have introduced from among the jurists, *fuqara*, Sufis and lay masses...

Then, my brothers, know the favour which Allah has favoured you with in your standing for that. Know your way to that and thank Allah Most High for that; He is the one who raised for you and us in this era the like of our master, the *shaykh* by whom Allah opened the locks of hearts and by whom he removed from sights the blindness of doubts and bewilderment of deviancy, wherein which the intellect would lose its way between these sects and not find the way to the reality of the faith of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

Among that which is strange is that each of them claims that he is on the faith of the Prophet until Allah revealed for us and you, by means of this man, the reality of His faith which he revealed from the heavens and preferred for His slaves.

Know that in the far flung areas of the world are communities that live their lives among these sects, believing that these innovations are the true Islam; they do not know Islam except like this.

Thank Allah who rose for you at the beginning of seven hundred years after the Hijra a man who clarified for you the rites of your faith, by whom Allah guided you and us to the way of His Sacred Law (Shari'ah), and with this Muhammadi light he clarified for you the deviances of people and their errors. You began to recognise that which is crooked from that which is straight, and right from wrong. I hope you will be the aided group, those who will not be harmed by those who abandon them and oppose them—they will be in the Levant *insha-Allah Ta'ala*.

Chapter

When you have known this, then recognise the right and worth of this man who is among us; his right and worth will not be recognised save by he who has recognised the religion of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), and its right and worth. He in whose heart the faith of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has taken the place that it deserves will recognise the correctness of that with which this man has stood up amidst the slaves of Allah—he sets right their distortions, corrects their corruption and rectifies their unsettled affairs as much as possible in these dark times in which the faith is distorted, the Sunnahs are unknown, innovations are common, good is wrong and wrong is good. The one holding on to his religion is like the one holding hot embers. Surely, the reward of he who stands in expressing this light in this darkness cannot be described; its danger cannot be recognised. This is when you recognise him from the exoteric Shar‘iah way. There are people here who have recognised him in a different way, in an esoteric manner. They are those who he guided to recognise the names of Allah Most High and His qualities and the greatness of His being (*dhat*), to attach their hearts to the beams of His *ma‘rifah*, to be fortunate to possess the specialities of His *ma‘rifah* and lofty spiritual bliss (*dhawq*), to pass from the exoteric to the esoteric and from witnessing to absence and from absence to witnessing, and to pass from the abode of the creation to the abode of the matter and other things the explanation of which is not possible in a book.

Your *shaykh*—may Allah Most High aid you—is a knower of all of that. He knows the injunctions of Allah and the Sacred Law, he is a knower of injunctions pertaining to His names and personal qualities. The like of this knower (*‘arif*) at times looks with his sight the descending of the Command between the levels of the heavens and the earth. It is as He Most High has said: *“Allah is the One who has created seven skies, and their like from earth. The Command descends among them, so that you may know that Allah is powerful over everything, and that Allah has encompassed everything in knowledge.”* (65:12)

People sense that which operates in the abode of viewing (*‘alam al-shahadah*), while the sight of these people is focused on the unseen awaiting what destiny shall bring. They feel this at times when it descends.

Do not consider insignificant the situation of these people due to their friendliness with people and preoccupying their time with them. They are as has been narrated from Junayd (may Allah have mercy on him) that it

was said to him: “How much do you call unto Allah Most High while being with people?” He replied: “I call unto the people while in front of Allah.”

Allah ensures he (Ibn Taymiyyah) is respected and his orders are carried out. He protects his honour in his presence and absence, He loves he who loves him and keeps aloof those who dislike him and demean him. He rejects slander regarding him and is in support of him in the truth.

Know, may Allah have mercy on you, that there is here that person who travelled to the provinces and recognised the people and their habits, and came to know of the majority of their conditions. I swear by Allah, I swear by Allah and I swear by Allah, he has not seen under the skies the like of your *shaykh* in knowledge, actions, spiritual condition (*hal*), manners, following, nobility, gentleness in matters regarding himself, and firmness in standing for the right of Allah when that which He has made sacred and inviolable is broken. He is the most truthful of people in making an agreement, most correct in knowledge and intention, the most energetic and zealous in aiding and establishing the truth, the most generous and perfect in following the Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

We have not seen in this age of ours anyone who presents with clarity the Muhammadan Prophethood (*al-nubuwwah al-Muhammadiyah*) and the Sunnah from his sayings and actions except this man. He does so in a way that the balanced heart testifies that this is following in the true sense.

After all of this, saying the truth is incumbent. We do not claim infallibility from mistakes in relation to him, nor do we claim he is absolutely perfect in relation to all specialities that are sought after for there are, at times, sought after and desired specialities in some who are deficient—these are such specialities that perfection would not be complete without them. The just knower is not ignorant of this value. If speaking the truth was not obligatory and being sectarian (*ta'assub*) in relation to people is swerving from the truth (*hawa*), then I would have abstained from mentioning this. However, speaking the truth is incumbent regardless if it displeases or pleases. Help is sought from Allah.

When you have recognised this—may Allah Most High help you—then look after his heart, for indeed the likes of him at times are called on in a

great fashion in the heavenly sphere. Carry out actions to make him happy in all possible ways and attract his affection and fondness as much as is possible for the like of him are possessors of great knowledge and those in possession of great knowledge seek in this era the likes of him. So, if you were to gain his affection then I would hope for you, on account of that, some specialities that I shall not disclose or mention. At times, the intelligent from among you will recognise that and at times my soul shall allow me to mention so that my advice is not hidden from you.

That speciality is that you acquire a piece of his special Muhammadan connection with Allah Most High, for that will only come by means of the *shaykh's* love for the *murid*, and the *murid* will attract the *shaykh's* love by being gentle with him, looking after his heart and feelings, and attracting his affection and fondness. By that, I hope for you a portion of that which is between him and Allah Most high not to mention what you earn from him in terms of his exoteric knowledge, benefits and managing of affairs, *insha-Allah*.

I hope that when you are successful in the relationship between you and your Lord Most High by means of correct dealings [with Him] by safeguarding that hour, the five prayers and Tahajjud, then He will bestow you with knowing the reality of this man and true information about him, *insha-Allah*.

I have only mentioned the safeguarding of one hour even though the five prayers are enough when the slave stands to pray for Allah Most High's sake; that is because the five prayers come suddenly on the slave while his heart is gripped by external distractions and so he does not recognise the lot of his heart with his Lord within that time. When the slave has an hour from the night and day in which he recognises the lot of his heart with his lord then when the prayers come he will recognise during that time his condition—his advancement and retraction—in comparison to his condition with his Lord in that one hour. It is from Allah that aid is sought.

The Salafi Imam Hafiz Ibn 'Abdul Hadi al-Hanbali has also mentioned in *Al-'Uqud al-Durriyyah* an extremely long poem composed by Shaykh 'Abdullah ibn Khidhr ibn 'Abdur Rahman al-Rumi (by origin) al-Dimashqi al-Hariri, who was known as al-Mutayyam (the Enthrallled in Love), to mourn the death of Shaykh Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah. The composer is one of the *shaykh's* companions (may Allah be pleased with him and

may he also please Him). We shall cite from it some poems pertaining to this issue:

I have lost an *imam* who was unique in his era, the entire creation is in grief in this era,

I have lost an *imam* who constantly placed his trust in Allah and did not incline to anything contrary to the Sunnah,

I have lost an *imam* who acted on knowledge and was in reality one who uprooted every innovation (*bid'ah*),

He brought the Book of Allah and the Sunnah which is lofty and which definitely rose higher than every other religion,

He brought the hadiths of the Prophet and explained them, and from those he narrated he did so with the correct text,

He brought the knowledge of the entire world with asceticism, support, piety and strength,

He brought the principles of the faith and *fiqh* that required explanation and explained them with detail leaving no doubt,

He brought before us the conditions of the Prophet in their true sense and his biography which ascends over every other life story,

He brought to us the conditions of all of the Companions and the Followers (Tabi'in) the straight religion,

He brought before us the qualities of all of the *imams* and compiled books describing them,

He brought to us the description of the pious and their conditions and that on which they were in terms of beautiful *'aqidah*,

...

Who was a *qutub* of the universe (*al-kawn*) in his time save he? Who else had reached being an *abdal* (*al-badaliyyah*)?

He was brave, high-minded and excellent in his qualities. He would aim high in lofty levels,

...

In love of his Lord he would command the good and forbid the wrong firmly,

He was god-fearing, pure and upright since his youth, and of noble disposition and praiseworthy qualities,

Is he not the one whose mention has spread in the universe and who spread wide among the creation great *fatwas*?

Who was the crown of the knowers of Allah (*'arifs*) in our era and the *shaykh* of guidance? Tell me without any zeal (*hamiyyah*),

He was the sage (*hibr*) and *qutub* whose mention spread far and whose reputations as a man of piety became well known like fragrance when it disperses,

When we mention his condition and qualities, it is as if we have entered into enjoyment and a garden,

...

You bid farewell to us in a way that you will not be returning; you have gone from us and the abode is not distant,

I drank wine from the glass of the knowers of Allah (*'arifs*); its essence was from the innermost part of the spring of *haqiqah*,

I found by the glass kindness from you and generosity over those who followed the Sunnah of Ahmad,

Glory be to He Who granted you from the excesses of His generosity. Verily you acquired proximity that cannot be gained by means of a strategy,

Verily you lived beloved and died revered. Let the Merciful bestow on you the purest of greetings from me,

The radiance of His friendship continued to raise you and you remained forever with respect, proximity [to Him] and in loftiness.

Shaykh al-Mutayyam al-Rumi al-Hariri also has another poem which was written to lament the death of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) and which Hafiz Ibn ‘Abdul Hadi has mentioned in *Al-‘Uqud al-Durriyyah*. We shall also quote a few couplets from there:

He perpetually remained in need at the door of his Master and constantly afflicted with trials,

Forever he followed the ways of the Prophet according to the correct methodology by following proper signs,

He guided to his Sunnah, issued *fatwas* according to his Shari‘ah and safeguarded his boundaries at all hours,

He was the *qutub* of the era, the crown of all of the people and the embodiment of meanings who carried out all types of worship,

He was the sage of knowledge and unique in his knowledge. He annihilated with the sabre of guidance the people of deviance,

He drew from Mustafa knowledge and *ma‘rifah*; and came to him from the Prophet help and gifts,

A seeker of aid would not come to him, save that he would grant him, either with abundant generosity or [in the least] with what has been sought,

What shall I say? Is it that my speech in regards to him is confined to describing his manners? The words I utter have become fatigued,

In terms of his knowledge, we do not know anyone equal to him except for our *imams*, the people of kindness,

In terms of his asceticism, we have not heard of anyone who compares to him, save for the men of the past, the people of miracles,

In terms of his generosity, we have not found anyone akin to him, save for the al-Baramiks^[3] who were from the people of good fortune,

He would be generous and he was poor himself. How astonishing, he is the one we have never heard in stories,

The sun of The Noble One shines in his good character and in the clarity of his face is the light of guidance,

An ocean of inner knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifah*), at the beginning of which the people of great qualities [of knowledge, piety and generosity] and those who have reached the utmost point would wander lost,

He is a *qutub* of realities [pertaining to Allah]. The people of Tasawwuf and the men of spiritual exercises (*riyadat*) would be left perplexed in explaining his perfect qualities,

He was the wonder of the era and unrivalled in his excellent qualities, the '*allamah*' of the age in the past and in the future,

My heart grieved for he gathered us on the sciences that are commended and subtle allusions,

I separated from he who quenched my thirst just by seeing him because the secrets of worship would indeed manifest,

He narrated stories regarding the dwellers of Kazma which would enrapture people due to the excellent stories,

He would exert himself in mentioning their excellent qualities, as a result of which the heart would dance in eagerness like those who are noble,

He has reached Allah and the gardens of paradise are his abode. Let there be upon him from his Cherisher the purest of greetings,

Then salutation on the best of the people, he who Allah chose from the creation,

He who He chose to be in His presence on the night of Isra until the Lord of the Heavens manifested His self to him,

For he is the intercessor whose intercession is hoped at the times of difficulties on the day of reckoning,

Among the poems with which Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah was mourned, Hafiz Ibn ‘Abdul Hadi al-Hanbali has also narrated in *Al-‘Uqud al-Durriyyah* a lengthy ode by a military man from the Egyptian lands called Badr al-Din Muhammad ibn ‘Izz al-Din Aydumun al-Mughithi, an erudite man who had memorised an array of knowledge. He was religious and firm in his religion. He presented this poem to Imam Abu Hayyan. Here are some stanzas:

Converse without any fear and speak regarding his asceticism what you wish. There shall be no refutation or sins incurred [in doing so],

He abandoned food, clothes and the world. In his dedication in abandoning them he was firm,

He ate and slept little, and reverence for the men of the world could not be seen in his heart,

...

He was overcome with the awe of his Lord. His speech was, hence, one of revering and honouring [Him],

...

He would avoid people on account of his preoccupation with his Beloved. Hence, his showing of affection to those close to him was [simply] by way of making *salam*,

He had a standing in reaching his Lord. Such was his standing that pens would write about it,

And he possessed many favours from the hidden treasures of his Lord. [He also possessed] being sorrowful, humble and good speech,

[He also possessed, from his Lord, a standing in] Tasawwuf, a sense of abstinence, chastity, *qira’ah*, [a high level of] worship and [habitual] fasting,

[He also possessed from his Lord] divine focus, protection, guarding, safeguarding, faithfulness and standing,

He performed miracles which were very clear and much in number and, over the passing of time, continued [to take place],

Hafiz Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi has also produced, in *Al-‘Uqud al-Durriyyah*, an elegy also in remembrance of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah. He has, however, not mentioned the name of its composer.^[4] Here are some stanzas.

If only I had, on the day of departure, visited him so that I could renew my pledges that I had made,

....

He was our *shaykh*, our leader and our *imam*. To Allah is attributed his being pure, righteous and god fearing,

If you say he went around greatly for knowledge then this is the truth. Listen to this word regarding him and verify it,

He would issue *fatwas* by gathering the four *mathhabs*. However, in excellence he was the last of those who remained behind,

He was, in *qira’ah* unique in his age. In *usul* [of *fiqh*] he benefitted us and also in diction,

He was the *shaykh* of Tariqah and Haqiqah, and a knower of Allah (*‘arif*). He was an inheritor of *imamah* and the religious sciences, so verify it,

[He was] a giver of alms (*sadaqah*), kind and generous; I swear by Allah, no giver of alms can replace him,

....

Oh grave of his, that ascetic, pious, pure and god fearing one that you have taken possession of will please you greatly,

You have become a garden of paradise by his coming. For you, hence, is pride and prosperity with the master.

Having sufficed with various odes that some of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah’s companions and followers composed to lament his death,

we shall now begin citing the writings of some contemporary researchers. We will begin by quoting what the great Islamic thinker, the ‘*allamah*, the historian, the great researcher Sayyid Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali al-Hasani al-Nadawi (may Allah protect him with goodness and allow people to benefit from him) has mentioned in part two of his amazing book *Rijal al-Fikr wa al-Da‘wah fi al-Islam*^[5]—this part is full of mention of the life of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah:

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah as a Knower of Allah (‘*arif billah*) and Researcher (*muhaqqiq*)—New Revelations Regarding the Character of Ibn Taymiyyah

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah is generally known as a scholar of theology (*mutakallim*), a dialectic jurist (*faqih jadali*) and a great scholar of hadith. Students of his academic writings and books on dialectics do not feel he is more than an intelligent scholar of great knowledge, strong proof and wealth of information. Those who know him by way of the biographies that general historians have written or judge him according to his later students and those who affiliate themselves to him^[6] do not see in him anything more than a dry hadith scholar and scholar who is thoroughly familiar with the exoteric sciences. What Hafiz Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah has mentioned in *Madarij al-Salikin* in relation to his spiritual states (*hal*) and sayings at various opportunities and, likewise, what ‘Allamah al-Dhahabi and others like him have mentioned in his biography in relation to his manners and tastes, habits and character, and his spiritual exercises (*ashgal*) and actions clearly show that Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah fully deserves to be counted among the knowers of Allah (‘*arifs*) and people of Allah (*rijal Allah*) in this Ummah. All may be delighted to know that he took that place and enjoyed all those goals that, generally, cannot be easily acquired save by way of difficult spiritual exercises (*riyadat*), lengthy sacrifice, the spiritual conditioning (*tarbiyyah*) of the *imams* of this knowledge and constant *dhikr* and meditation (*muraqabah*)—and that is something that the later Sufis called *nisbah* with Allah.^[7] *That is a favour of Allah. He gives it to whom He wills* (57:29).

Numerous Means yet Singular Goal

It is clear to the people of insight that spiritual taste (*dhawq*), knowing Allah (*ma‘rifah*), actual faith (*iman haqiqi*), firm conviction (*yaqin*), sincerity, steadfastness, the purification of the inner self (*tazkiyat al-batin*), correcting manners, complete following of the Sunnah and

dedication in following the Shari‘ah are real goals that are sought after for which numerous means and paths are adopted. Those who research this have not limited their acquisition to a single path. The powerful and effective way to acquire these goals at the dawn of the history of the Islamic *da‘wah* was the company (*suhbah*) of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), the effect and strength of which was not unknown to anyone.

When the Ummah of Islam was deprived of this bounty, the successors of the Prophethood and the physicians of this Ummah in their eras practiced a way that could substitute that. Finally, they focused the majority of their attention, due to various causes, on *suhbah* and plenty of *dhikr* which has a documented and revised path that is known as the system of Tasawwuf and Suluk. One cannot deny that the acquisition of these goals and purposes is not dependant on these means, for *iman* and seeking reward from Allah (*ihṭisab*), taking stock of the inner self (*nafs*), following the Sunnah, preoccupation with the books of hadith and the characteristics of the Prophet (*shama‘il*) in terms of studying, teaching, serving and propagating them with love and reverence, plentiful *Salat wa Salam* on the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), serving the creation, Jihad, commanding the good and forbidding the wrong, calling to Allah (*da‘wah*) and propagation (*tabligh*) with the true intention and hope for reward, all of that—save [for that person who acquires] Allah’s particular focus of abundant bounty without toiling (*ijṭiba*) and being gifted with which some individuals are selected—are means to draw close to Allah and gain an affiliation (*nisbah*) to Him when it is done with faith, hope for reward, presence of mind and diligence.

There is nothing preventing means from being various and paths from being many for indeed the purpose is one. There is no doubt that all of the Shaykh al-Islam’s conditions show with clarity that he was successful in achieving that purpose. This is what I wish to clarify in the following lines.

Measuring Man’s Perfection and the Sign of him Reaching the Level of *Wilayah* and its Verification

We are capable of bearing witness for a man that he is from the knowers of Allah (*‘arifs*) and perfect verifiers (*muḥaqqiq*) and from among those whom Allah has accepted (*qubul*) by looking at their spiritual states (*hal*), tastes (*dhawq*) and general habits with which they lived. There is not, for

this, an apparent gauge or logical proof, and at times mistakes can be made by he who has been granted sound temperament and pure taste; on account of his abundant studying of the spiritual conditions of the knowers of Allah and the men of Allah and his remaining firm in their company with depth of mind and love (*wijdan*) he is able, with this, to pass judgment. However, there are signs and conditions with which it can be understood that the level of a religious man is loftier than the level of general people, and that he benefits from the manners of the men of Allah, their spiritual tastes, and the correct understanding of religion.

For example, to have a special disposition for servitude (*'ubudiyyah*), turning to Allah, taste for worship and to be absorbed in that, enjoyment from supplicating, earnestly praying and asceticism, to be cut off from the material world and to hold it in contempt, natural disposition to be generous, giving preference to others over one's self, humility and swallowing one's pride, tranquillity, happiness, totality in following the Sunnah, acceptance among the pious, testimony of *'ulama* for him, vigour of his followers and dear ones in religion, their pious conduct and other characteristics like that. In respect to that, we shall quote for readers the testimonies of the contemporaries of the Shaykh al-Islam and what the historians have registered in their books regarding these features which have been mentioned...

The *'allamah* and researcher al-Nadwi (may Allah protect him) has expanded in explaining this, something that has been rendered in an extremely pleasant and beautiful way. However, we shall omit this for brevity's sake and it is Allah Who is the Granter of Accordance.

We shall now quote excerpts from other contemporary writers and that is the doctor, the researcher and erudite Ahmad ibn Muhammad Bannani from his book *Mawqif al-Imam Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Tasawwuf wa al-Sufiyyah*, first published by Umm al-Qura University, Makkah al-Mukarramah, in 1406 AH.

The erudite doctor writes at the beginning of the book under the title "Summary of the Treatise":

This treatise, *Mawqif al-Imam Ibn Taymiyyah min al-Tasawwuf wa al-Sufiyyah*, as is clear from its title, consists of some of the issues that the Sufis wrote about and what came to pass between them in terms of discussions and debates; it presents that from their point of view and

that from which they drew conclusions for their views. It then clarifies the stance of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah in regards to this topic in terms of either criticism or support, and with ambiguity or detail.

In the meantime, the correct view that deserves to be supported becomes distinct from the faulty view that deserves to be rejected. From the whole of that, the overall stance of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah regarding Tasawwuf and the Sufis becomes clear.

It appears to me that Imam Ibn Taymiyyah definitely did not treat Tasawwuf in general with enmity, rather he rejected that which did not agree with the Book and the Sunnah and which was not transmitted from any of the Companions and Followers.

It has also become clear to us in the discussed issues known by the Sufis as stations (*maqamat*) and spiritual states (*ahwal*) that Imam Ibn Taymiyyah was more knowledgeable and specific in describing and detailing some of them than other Sufis and others who wrote regarding these subjects...

Likewise, he writes at the end of the book:

Secondly, the subject of our treatise is to show the stance of Imam Ibn Taymiyyah regarding Tasawwuf and if he was right or wrong. It has become clear to us in this treatise that verily Imam Ibn Taymiyyah adopted a true and honest gauge in taking stock of these people—take note this was the Book and the Sunnah.

Whoever treads on this way without straying even as much as a finger then he is on the truth and the right path, and deserving of praise and compliment. Whoever strays from among them from this correct way, turning from the straight path, then Imam Ibn Taymiyyah would pass judgment that his action and opinion are invalid.

We end this chain of citations from the writings of contemporary researchers with what the researcher Dr Majid 'Irsan al-Kaylani, professor at the Faculty of Tarbiyyah at King 'Abdul 'Aziz University—a branch of [the University of] Madinah al-Munawwarah—has mentioned in his book *Al-Fikr al-Tarbawi 'ind Ibn Taymiyyah*. Dr al-Kaylani writes on page 18:

The significance of the works of Henri Laoust^[8] is that he is the first researcher who focused on opposing the hostile tone regarding Ibn Taymiyyah in Western academic circles and presented a more superior and positive image of this Muslim thinker and his standing in the history of Islamic thinking.

Professor George Makdisi^[9] has tread along the path of Laoust in three of his papers that he wrote regarding Ibn Taymiyyah in a focused and academic way:

1] Ibn Taymiya's Autograph Manuscript on Istihsan.^[10]

2] Ibn Taymiya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order.^[11]

3] The Tanbih of Ibn Taymiya on Dialectic.^[12]

In all of these three papers, George Makdisi has tried to establish the mistake of Duncan MacDonald^[13] in terms of his antagonistic observations regarding Ibn Taymiyyah when he assumed that Ibn Taymiyyah was only a selfish man and that "he did not benefit the path of asceticism, philosophy or religion, and he only intended to benefit his self."^[14]

George Makdisi refutes this allegation by saying that the method of Ibn Taymiyyah and his lofty level of understanding Islam do not dismiss the standing of asceticism (*zuhd*) and Tasawwuf when the contents of asceticism and Tasawwuf are transmitted correctly and are correct in content. Makdisi continued his research in this field—and the one who has a passion for Ibn Taymiyyah could be led to lengthy and in-depth research.

He also writes on page 219:

Researchers have varied on Ibn Taymiyyah's stance regarding the Sufis and differed greatly. Writers on this topic have continuously revolved around pages of books and specialist magazines. Some—such as the orientalist D.B. MacDonald^[15]—have depicted that he is equally the archenemy of Sufism and the spiritual life.

Others have always insisted that Ibn Taymiyyah was not an enemy of the Sufis and that he himself was a Sufi who acquired his Sufism by way of the Qadiri *tariqah*.

The reality is that which Ibn Taymiyyah set his goal on was presenting the original essence of Tasawwuf like the school of nurturing and moulding (*al-madrasah al-tarbawiyah*) whose fundamental purpose is refining the inner self and purifying it from its base qualities, and it is because of this he opposed every deviation that came over Tasawwuf in those matters that single out this goal and everything that opposes the Quran and Sunnah in this field.

As a starting point of this principle, Ibn Taymiyyah expresses great respect for the pioneers of asceticism and the *shaykhs* of Tasawwuf who held firmly to the Quran and Sunnah such as Fudayl ibn ‘Ayyad, Ibrahim ibn Adham, Sarri al-Saqati, Junayd, Hammad al-Dabbas, Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir al-Kilani and ‘Adi ibn Musafir.

As to what George Makdisi has mentioned in respect to attributing Ibn Taymiyyah to the Qadiris, he has relied in that on the *silsilah* of the *shaykhs* of Ibn Taymiyyah which begins with Muwaffaq al-Din ibn Qudamah, the student of ‘Abdul Qadir mentioned above and graduate of the Qadiri *madrasah* in Baghdad.

He also relied, likewise, on the respect and veneration that Ibn Taymiyyah has saturated his writings with in respect to Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir. In his letters and books he refers to Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir in the same level by which he refers to Imam Ibn Hanbal in the titles that he bestows on him. So he is the “Pole of the Knowers of Allah” (*qutub al-‘arifin*), “Our Shaykh Abu Muhammad May Allah Sanctify his Secret” (*qaddas Allahu Ruhahu*), “the greatest in his era in holding firm to the Shari‘ah”,^[16] “Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir and his like are from the greatest *shaykhs* of their era in holding firm to the Shari‘ah, commanding [good] and forbidding , and turning to tasting of spiritual bliss (*dhawq*), and from the greatest *shaykhs* in abandoning whims (*hawa*) and carnal intentions.”^[17] When Ibn Taymiyyah brings an example he says: “It is because of this that Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir and his like from the righteous (*mustaqim*) *shaykhs*.”^[18] He cites him greatly like a model who is followed in beliefs and *suluk*.

Likewise, Ibn Taymiyyah has explained many excerpts from the sayings of ‘Abdul Qadir and commented on his book—*Futuh al-Ghayb*—in hundreds of pages which are included within the tenth volume of [his] *Al-Fatawa* that is entitled *Kitab ‘Ilm al-Suluk* (*The Book of the Science of Suluk*). In the course of the commentary, Ibn Taymiyyah presents

Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir as an example that embodied correct firm adherence to the Book and the Sunnah.

There are here some indications in the books of Ibn Taymiyyah that indicate that his family had a spiritual connection to Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir. For example, he mentions in *Kitab ‘Ilm al-Suluk*: “My father narrated to me from Muhyi al-Din al-Nuhas and I believe I heard from him that he saw Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir in his dream and he was saying regarding Allah Most High: ‘Whoever comes to us, we shall receive them...’” He then continues to explain this text over a number of pages...^[19]

He also writes on page 222:

Whatever the situation is, the stance that Ibn Taymiyyah took regarding the Sufis is distinct in two ways: The first is that he treated the Sufis in the exact manner with which he treated the jurists (*fuqaha*), the *mathabs* of *fiqh* and the ‘*ulama* of *kalam* (theologians). He was of the view that the early *shaykhs* of Tasawwuf had confined their knowledge and spiritual training (*tarbiyyah*) to the Book and the Sunnah. As to the later ones, many of them deviated due to the effect of the new Platonism which had generally penetrated Islamic thought during the translation of Greek knowledge and that they strayed far from the correct path of asceticism (*zuhd*) and spiritual training (*al-tarbiyyah al-ruhiyyah*). The second is that Ibn Taymiyyah did not reject Tasawwuf wholesome and only disapproved that which befell it in terms of leaving the primary goals and the ways of spiritual training and *suluk*. Regarding that he said: “The Sufis have established their matter on intention (*iradah*) and that is important. This is, however, with the condition that the intention is with Allah alone in fulfilling what He commands.”^[20]

He also says: “That corruption in beliefs and actions that befell these people (the Sufis) necessitated that many groups totally rejected the original path of the Sufis until those who erred were of two types: one type that affirms its being right and also wrong and another type that negates its being right and wrong, positions on which there are the people of theology and *fiqh*. The only correct position is affirming that which is, in this matter and others, in agreement with the Book and the Sunnah, and rejecting that which is, in this matter and others, contrary to the Book and the Sunnah.”^[21]

1] *Majmu' Fatawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah* (compiled and codified by 'Abdur-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Qasim al-'Asimi al-Najdi al-Hanbali with the help of his son, Muhammad). First edition: 1381 AH, Matba'ah al-Riyadh. Vol. 11, p. 5:

The Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah sanctify his soul) was asked regarding the Sufis and whether they are a group and whether the *fugara* are also a group. What is the characteristic of each type? What is necessary on him and preferred for him to tread?

He responded: All praise is for Allah. As to the word Sufism, this word did not become popular during the [first] three generations, its mention only become popular after that. Speech regarding it has been conveyed from more than one of the *imams* and *shaykhs* such as Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abu Sulayman al-Darani and others. It has been narrated from Sufyan al-Thawri that he has spoken regarding this. Some of them mention this from Hasan al-Basri. They have differed in the meaning to which the [the word] Sufi is attributed, for it is one of the descriptive nouns of affinity (*asma al-nasab*) such as al-Qurashi, al-Madani and their like.

It has been said that it is attributed to the Ahl al-Suffah (People of the Platform) and this is incorrect because if it were the case then they would be called *suf-fi*. It is also said that it is attributed to *al-saff al-muqaddam* (the foremost rank) in front of Allah and this is also incorrect because if it were the case then they would be called *saf-fi*. It is also said that it is attributed to *al-safwah min khalqillah* (the choicest of individuals from the creation Allah) and this is also incorrect because if it were then they would be called *safawi*. It is also said that it is attributed to Sufah bin Bishr bin Addi bin Tabikha, an Arabian tribe that used to inhabit Makkah in the ancient times towards whom the ascetic attributed themselves. This, even if it is in agreement to the attribution in terms of the word, is also weak because these people are not famous and are unknown to the majority of the ascetics; this is because if the ascetics are attributed to these people then this lineage would have been superior in the era of the Companions, the Followers and the Followers of the Followers, and also because the majority of those who speak regarding the word Sufi do not know this tribe and are not content with being attributed to a tribe from the Era of Ignorance (Jahiliyyah) which has no existence within Islam.

It is said, and this is popular, that it is attributed to the wearing of *suf* (wool); for indeed the Sufis first appeared in Basra and the first to build a small house for the Sufis were some of the companions of ‘Abdul Wahid bin Zayd,^[1] and ‘Abdul Wahid was among the companions of Hasan [al-Basri]. In Basra, there was a great deal of asceticism (*zuhd*), worship, fear [of Allah] and their like which were not present in the people of the other lands. It is because of this it was said: *Fiqh* is from Kufa and worship is from Basra.

Abu al-Shaykh al-Asbahani has narrated from his chain from Muhammad bin Sirin that news reached him about a group of people who preferred woollen clothes. He said, “Surely, the community that prefers wool says that they resemble Masih ibn Maryam whereas the guidance of our Prophet is dearer to us. The Prophet ﷺ used to wear cotton etc”. He said some words to this effect.

It is because of this that the majority of extreme narrations relating to this subject that have been narrated are only from the worshippers from among the people of Basra, such as the story of those who died or became unconscious when hearing the Quran etc namely the story of Zurarah bin Awfa, the *qadi* of Basra, who recited in the Fajr prayer “*And when the trumpet shall be blown (Al-Muddaththir: 8)* and then fell dead. Then there is the story of Abu Juhayr al-A‘ma who died when Salih al-Murri recited to him. Likewise, there are others regarding who it is narrated that they died by listening to his recitation. Among them was a group who would fall unconscious when hearing the Qur’an and there were none among the Companions whose condition was like this. So, when this appeared a group of the Companions and Followers disapproved it such as Asma bint Abu Bakr, ‘Abdullah bin al-Zubayr, Muhammad bin Sirin and others.

Those who disapprove have two contentions. Among them are those who feel that this behaviour is affectation and pretentious. It is mentioned regarding Muhammad bin Sirin that he said, “There is nothing between us and those who fall unconscious on hearing the Qur’an except that it is recited on one of them while he is on a wall. If he were to fall, then he is truthful”.

Among them are those who condemned this as they saw it as an innovation contrary to what is recognised from the guidance of the Companions, as has been conveyed from Asma [bint Abu Bakr] and her son, ‘Abdullah [bin Zubayr].

That on which the majority of the scholars is that when one of them is overcome then he should not be rebuked, while the condition of remaining in composure is superior to that. It is because of this that when Imam Ahmad was asked regarding this, he said, "The Qur'an was recited on Yahya bin Sa'id al-Qattan who fell unconscious and if anyone was able to repel this from himself then Yahya bin Sa'id would have done so. I did not see anyone wiser than he". And he mentioned things like this. It has been narrated from al-Shafi'i that he said this was correct. The story of 'Ali bin 'Ayyad is famous. In sum, he is from the multitude of those in whose truthfulness there is no doubt.

However, the condition in which the Companions were is mentioned in the Qur'an and that is that their hearts become fearful, eyes shed tears and bodies shivered...

Those who have hard hearts on which there is rust and aversion for religion, which is reprehensible, criticise the situation of these people and they surely have. There are among them those who think that their condition is the most perfect, complete and lofty. Both extremes in these matters are reprehensible.

Rather, there are three levels. The first is the situation of he who is oppressing his self (*zalim li-nafsihi*); he is hard hearted and does not soften to hearing [the Quran] and *dhikr*...

The second is the situation of the Allah-fearing believer in who there is weakness in tolerating that which comes on his heart. He is the one who is afflicted by death or unconsciousness for that is only according to the strength of the feeling that comes and the weakness of the heart to bear it. The likes of this is at times found in he who is happy, or fearful, or sorrowful, or loves worldly matters. It kills him, or makes him sick, or causes him to lose his mind. From among the worshippers of images there are those who fall ill because of love, or die, or become insane; the situation is similar in others. This only happens to that person on whose soul a feeling appears and his soul is weak to repel it; this is similar to those causes that make a person ill or cause him to die. Or it may be that one of them overcomes them...

These conditions which are associated with unconsciousness, death, insanity, a feeling of intoxication (*sukr*) or annihilation (*fana*) until he

does not feel himself etc—when their causes are sanctioned in Shari‘ah and the person involved is sincere and unable to repel them, then he is praiseworthy for the righteousness he has done and the *iman* he has attained, and excused in that matter in which he is powerless and which afflicted him without choice. Such individuals are more perfect than those who have not reached their status due to imperfection in their *iman*, hard heartedness and other causes which consist of abandoning that which Allah loves and doing that which Allah dislikes.

However, he whose mind remains stable while he has attained that *iman* that they have attained or its like or more, then he is superior to them. This was the condition of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) and the condition of our Prophet ﷺ, for indeed he was taken to the heavens and Allah showed him what he showed him and in the morning he was like the one who slept at night, his condition had not changed him. Hence, his condition was superior to the condition of Musa (peace be upon him) who fell unconscious when his Lord appeared to the mountain, and the condition of Musa was excellent, lofty and great. However, the condition of Muhammad ﷺ was greater in perfection, loftier and superior.

The purpose [of the above text] is that these matters in which there was increased worship and spiritual states (*haal*) came from Basra and that was because of the intense fear. Indeed, that which they mention from the fear of ‘Utbah al-Ghulam and ‘Ata al-Sulaymi and their like is a great matter. There is no doubt that their condition was more perfect and superior than he who has no fear of Allah to compare with or supersede them. He who fears Allah in a moderate manner, they call him to do that which Allah loves and leave that which Allah dislikes without this increase, then his spiritual condition is more perfect and superior than these others. This was the condition of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them). It has been narrated that ‘Ata al-Sulaymi (may Allah be pleased with him) was seen after his death. He was asked, “What did Allah do with you?” He responded, “I was told, O ‘Ata, were you ashamed of me that you feared me to such an extent? Did you not know that I am the Most Forgiving and the Most Merciful?”

Likewise, in relation to that which is mentioned from the likes of these people in terms of [their] spiritual conditions of asceticism, fear of Allah, worship etc, at times there is mentioned some increase over the condition of the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) and the

way shown by the Prophet ﷺ; these are matters in which people can be categorised into two: There is a community that derides them and finds fault in them, at times they exceed the limit in this; and there is a community which exceeds the limit within them and they consider this path the most perfect and lofty.

The truth is that they are in these forms of worship and spiritual conditions *mujtahids* (one who exercises independent reasoning [*ijtihad*]) just like their neighbours from the people of Kufa are *mujtahids* in issues relating to the judiciary, state etc. It was among them that *rai* (independent opinion) emerged which was contrary to the Sunnah and which the majority of the people disapproved. The elite from the people of *fiqh* and *rai* (*Ahl al-Fiqh wa al-Rai*) from the people of Kufa are dealt with in two ways: there is a community that derides them and exceeds the limit in relation to them, and another community that exceeds the limit in praising them and considers them more knowledgeable in *fiqh* than those besides them. At times, they raise them over the Companions, just as the extremists from those worshippers at times raise them over the Companions. And this is an issue in which people are disunited.

What is correct for the Muslim is that the best word is the word of Allah, the best way is the way of Muhammad ﷺ, the best of eras is that in which he was sent, and the best of ways and paths to Allah is that on which he and his Companions were. It can be understood from this that it is necessary on the believers that they fear Allah according to their effort and capacity as He Most High has said: “*Fear Allah as much as you can*”. (64:16) The Prophet ﷺ said, “When I order you something, complete it as much as you can”. He Most High said: “*Allah does not burden a soul save according to its capacity*”. (2:286) Indeed, many of the believers—the Allah-fearing *walis* of Allah—at times acquire that perfect knowledge and faith (*iman*) that was gained by the Companions, hence they fear Allah as much as they can and obey according to their efforts. It is inevitable that he carries out a mistake, either in his knowledge and sayings, or in his actions and conditions. They are rewarded for their obedience and pardoned for their mistakes for indeed Allah Most High has said, “*The Prophet has brought faith on that which his Lord has sent to him and also the believers; all of them have brought faith on Allah, His messengers, His books and His prophets; [they say] we do not differentiate between any of His prophets and they say, ‘We have heard and are obedient, forgive us our Lord and to you is the*

coming.' Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity. For him is what he has earned, and on him what he has incurred. 'Our Lord, do not hold us accountable, if we forget or make a mistake.'" (2:185-286) Allah Most High says, I have done.

Hence, he who makes the way of one of the scholars and jurists, or the way of one of the worshippers or ascetics more superior than the way of the Companions, then he is mistaken, in error and an innovator. Also, he who regards as derided, at fault and detested every *mujtahid* in matters of obedience who has made a mistake in some matters, then he is in error and an innovator...^[2]

(16)

Now, it is known that Basra was the source of Tasawwuf and there were there those who treaded the path of worship and asceticism in matters in which there is *ijtihad* just like in Kufa there were those who tread the path of *fiqh* and knowledge in matters in which there is *ijtihad*. They are attributed to an external manner of dress which is the wearing of wool (*suf*). Hence, it is said regarding any one of them Sufi. Their way is not confined to the wearing of wool nor did they make that compulsory or command that. Rather, they have been attributed to that because of its being the external appearance.

(16)

Then, Tasawwuf according to them has some realities and spiritual states (*hal*) that are well known; they have spoken regarding its limits, path and manners such as the saying of some of them that the Sufi is he who has been cleansed from impurity and filled with thought [of Allah], for him gold and stone are equal. Tasawwuf is the concealing of the good qualities of a person, and abandoning pretensions and their like. With the word Sufi they head to the meaning of *siddiq*. The most superior of individuals after the prophets are the *siddiqs*. It is as Allah Most High mentions: "*They are with those on who Allah has favoured from the prophets, the siddiqs, the martyrs and the pious. And excellent are they as companions*". (4:69) It is because of this that there are, according to them, none after the prophets who were superior than the Sufi. However, he is in reality a type of the *siddiqs*. They are *siddiqs* who have specialised in asceticism and worship according to the way in which they have carried out *ijtihad*. Hence, the *siddiq* is from the people of this path. It is as it is said: *siddiq al-'ulama* (*siddiq* of the '*ulama*)

and *siddiq al-umara* (*siddiq* from among the leaders). He is more special than the general *siddiq* and less than the *siddiq* who is perfect in his *siddiqiyyah*, namely the Companions, the Followers and the Followers of the Followers.

So, when it is said regarding these ascetics and worshippers from the people of Basra that they are *siddiqs*, then this is as it is said regarding the *imams* of the jurists from the people of Kufa that they are also *siddiqs*. Each of them is such according to the way that he has treaded in terms of obedience to Allah and His Prophet according to his *ijtihad*. At times they may be from the greatest *siddiqs* in their era and so they will be the most perfect *siddiqs* of their age. The *siddiq* of the First Era is more perfect than them and the *siddiqs* are of different levels and types. It is because of this that each of them has a category of spiritual state and worship that he has realized and perfected and mastered even though there is someone else in a different category that is more perfect and superior than him.

Because of the *ijtihad* and debates that occurred among many of them, the people have differed with each other in relation to their path. There is a group that has derided the Sufis and Tasawwuf and said that they are innovators and outside of the Sunnah. Speech in relation to this has been narrated from the *imams* of this group which is well known, and a group of the people of *fiqh* and *kalam* (creed) have followed them in this. There is a group that has exceeded the limits in relation to them and claimed that they are the most superior of the creation and the most perfect after the prophets. Both sides in these issues are blameworthy.^[3]

What is correct is that they are *mujtahids* in the obedience of Allah in the way that others aside from them from the people who are obedient to Allah have done *ijtihad*. Among them is he who has gone ahead and drawn close according to his *ijtihad*, and among them is he who is moderate and is from the people of the right (*ahl al-yamin*). In each of these two groups, there is he who at times performs *ijtihad* and then errs. Among them is he who commits a sin and then repents or does not. Among those who attribute themselves to them is he who oppresses his self and disobeys his Lord.

A group from the people of innovation and heresy has also attributed themselves to them. However, according to the authentic people of Tasawwuf, they are not from them, like al-Hallaj^[4] for example. Indeed the majority of the *shaykhs* of Tasawwuf have rejected him and cast him

out of the path, such as Junayd bin Muhammad, the *sayyid al-ta'ifah*, as Shaykh Abu 'Abdurrahman al-Sulami has mentioned in *Tabaqat al-Sufiyyah* and Hafiz Abu Bakr al-Khatim in *Tarikh Baghdad*. This is the original Tasawwuf.

Then, after that it went into groups and types and the Sufis became three: *Sufiyyah al-Haqa'iq* (Sufi of the Knowledge of Allah), *Sufiyyah al-Arzaq* (Sufi in Search of Material Gain) and *Sufiyyah al-Rasm* (The Ceremonial Sufi). As to the *Sufiyyah al-Haqa'iq*, they are the ones we have described. As to the *Sufiyyah al-Arzaq*, they are the ones who have endowments (*waqf*) entrusted to them such as the *khanqahs*. It is not a condition among them that they are people of the Knowledge of Allah (*haqa'iq*) as that is a great matter. The majority of the people of *haqa'iq* are not characterised as having *khanqahs*. However, it is a precondition that there are three conditions in them:

The first is Shari'ah integrity in that they fulfil the obligatory acts (*fard*) and abstain from the forbidden (*haram*); the second is learning the etiquettes (*adab*) of the people of the path, and that is the etiquettes of Shari'ah at all times. As to the created and innovated rituals, then they do not turn to them; and the third is that none of them clings to excessive worldly material. As to he who hoards wealth or does not have praiseworthy etiquettes and has not learned Shari'ah manners or is a *fasiq*, then he is not deserving of that.

As to the *Sufiyyah al-Rasm*, they are restricted according to their understanding to attire and created rituals etc. They are, among the Sufis, on the level of he who restricts to wearing the attire of the people of knowledge and the people of Jihad. They modify their speech and actions in a way that the ignorant assumes the reality of his condition is that he is from them when he is not...

He then discusses at length the word *faqir* until he mentions:

... However, when asceticism (*zuhd*) became prominent among the *faqirs*, [the word] *faqr*, in the nomenclature of many of the people, came to define the path of *zuhd* which is a form of Tasawwuf.

Hence, when it is said, "In him there is *faqr* or there is no *faqr* in him", the meaning is not that he does not have wealth. What is, however, meant by that is what is meant by the word Sufi—namely knowledge of

Allah (*ma'rifah*), spiritual states (*hal*), manners (*akhlaq*) and etiquettes (*adab*) etc.

According to this terminology, they have differed regarding which is superior: the *faqir* or the Sufi? A group has gone towards preferring the Sufi such as Abu Ja'far al-Suhrawardi and his like. A group has gone towards preferring the *faqir* such as other groups. At times, these are specially characterised by *zawiyahs* and those with *khanqahs* etc. And the majority of people prefer the *faqir*.

Precisely speaking, the superior of the two is he who is more Allah fearing. Hence, if the Sufi is more fearing of Allah then he shall be superior than the other. That is by him being greater in abundantly doing those actions which Allah loves and abandoning what he dislikes. He is greater than the *faqir*. If the *faqir* abundantly performs those actions which Allah loves and abandons those that He dislikes, then he shall be superior than the other. And if they are equal in performing beloved actions and leaving unloved actions, then they shall be equal in status.

The *walis* of Allah are the Allah-fearing believers, regardless if one of them is named *faqir*, Sufi, jurist (*faqih*), 'alim, businessman, soldier, craftsman, prince, ruler or anything else. Allah Most High mentions, "*Be attentive, the friends of Allah shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve—those who believe and are Allah fearing*". (10:62/63)

2] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu'a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 25:

He was asked: What do the jurists—may Allah be pleased with them—say regarding a man who says, "Certainly, we are not devoted to *faqr*,^[5] we have not been ordered to follow it. It has no body or any meaning. It is not a path that connects to the pleasure of Allah Most High and the pleasure of His prophet. We are only focused on following the command of Allah and abstaining from what He has forbidden, namely [following] the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His prophet ﷺ.

Certainly, the base of everything is knowledge, focusing on it and acting on it, fear of Allah (*taqwa*) and abstaining from what is haram.

The *faqr* on the tongues of the group and the seniors is asceticism (*zuhd*) in the world and Shari'ah knowledge benefits asceticism in the world. Hence, asceticism in the world and acting on knowledge is *faqr*. Therefore, *faqr* is a branch from the branches of knowledge and the matter is like this. There is no path that connects more [to Allah] than

knowledge and acting on knowledge according to that which is correct and established from the Prophet ﷺ .

He also says, “Indeed, the *faqr* named and known by the majority of the People of Garb (*Ahl al-Zayy*) that has become prevalent in our era in terms of habitual dress, words and nomenclature are not pleasing to Allah or to His Prophet”. Is the matter like he says or different? Answer us, you shall be rewarded.

Shaykh Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah be pleased with him, answered: All praise is for Allah. The base of this issue is that words that have been mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah, it is our duty that we follow that which they denote. For example, the words faith, piety, fear of Allah (*taqwa*), truth, justice, goodness, patience, thankfulness, reliance (*tawakkul*), fear and hope (*khawf wa raja*), love for Allah, obedience to Allah and the Prophet, kindness to parents and fulfilling promises etc are from those matters which imply the mention of that which Allah and His Prophet love from the heart and the body. Hence, these matters which Allah and His Prophet love are the way to reach Allah while abandoning that which Allah and His Prophet have forbidden, namely disbelief, hypocrisy, lying, sins, enmity, oppression, being impatient, polytheism, stinginess, cowardice, hard-heartedness, treachery, breaking ties with relatives etc. It is the duty of every Muslim to look at what Allah and His Prophet have commanded and to fulfil that and also look at that which Allah and His Prophet have forbidden and to abandon that. This is the path of Allah, His way and His religion, the Straight Path, the path of those on who Allah has favoured from the prophets, the *siddiqs*, the martyrs and the pious.

This is the Straight Path (*al-Sirat al-Mustaqim*) which comprises knowledge and actions: Shari‘ah knowledge and Shari‘ah actions. Hence, he who knows and does not act on his knowledge, he is a sinner (*fajir*) and he who acts without knowledge is astray. Allah Most High has ordered that we say: “*Take us on the straight path. The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray*”. (1:6-7) The Prophet ﷺ said, “The Jews are those who have incurred the wrath on them, and the Christians are those who have gone astray”. That is because the Jews recognised the truth and did not act on it and the Christians worshipped Allah without knowledge.

It is because of this that the Salaf used to say, “Fear the tribulation (*fitnah*) of a sinful (*fajir*) scholar and an ignorant worshipper for indeed their *fitnah* is a *fitnah* for every person who has been afflicted”. They also used to say, “He who has become corrupt from among the scholars has a similarity with the Jews and he who has become corrupt from the worshippers has a similarity with the Christians”. Hence, he who calls to knowledge without action (*‘amal*) which has been commanded is astray and he who calls to action (*‘amal*) without knowledge is astray. More astray than them both is he who treads in knowledge the path of the people of innovation and follows matters which are contrary to the Book and the Sunnah which he assumes is knowledge when it is ignorance. Similar is he who treads in [matters of] worship the path of the people of innovation. He carries out actions which are contrary to the actions that have been legislated in Shari‘ah which he assumes are acts of worship when they are acts of deviance. Both of these are many among those who are astray and attribute themselves to *fiqh* and *faqr*. They come together in that they call to knowledge without action and action without knowledge. That which they call towards has innovation (*bid‘ah*) which is contrary to the Shari‘ah. The path of Allah is not complete save with knowledge and action, both of which should be in agreement with the Shari‘ah.

Therefore, the one treading the path of *faqr*, Tasawwuf, *zuhd* and worship, if he does not tread with knowledge that is in agreement with the Shari‘ah he is astray from the path and that which he ruins is greater than that which he corrects. The one treading *fiqh*, knowledge, speculative reasoning (*nazr*) and dogma (*kalam*), if he does not follow the Shari‘ah and act on its knowledge he shall be a sinner and astray from the path. This is the basis on which it is necessary every Muslim relies.

As to bigotry (*ta‘assub*) in relation to a matter from the matters for which there is no guidance from Allah, then this is an act of ignorance: “*And who is more astray than he who followed his desire without any guidance from Allah*”. (28:5)

There is no doubt that the word *faqr* in the Book and the Sunnah and the words of the Companions, Followers and the Followers of the Followers is not used to intend the Path of Allah (*tariq*), doing that which He ordained, the abandoning of that which he forbade, praiseworthy manners etc., rather, *faqr* according to them was the antonym of rich (*ghina*). The *fuqara* are those who Allah has mentioned when he said, “*The sadaqah (prescribed charity) is only to be given to the poor*

(*fuqara*) and the destitute...” (Al-Tawbah:60) And in His saying, “(Your charities should be preferably meant) for the needy (*fuqara*) who are confined in the way of Allah...” (Al-Baqarah:273) And His saying, “For the poor (*fuqara*) emigrants who were expelled from their homes and properties...” (Al-Hashr:8) The rich (*ghani*) is he for whom taking of Zakah is not permissible or he on who Zakah is incumbent or that which is similar to that. However, when *faqr* was inferred as being asceticism (*zuhd*), willingly or unwillingly, because it is from [divine] protection that you are incapable, many of those of the later times began to associate *faqr* with the meaning of asceticism (*zuhd*); asceticism at times can be with wealth and at times with poverty. Hence, among the prophets and the first to accept Islam there were those who were ascetic in spite of their abundant wealth.

Zuhd that is prescribed is the abandoning of that which does not benefit in the hereafter. As to everything that the slave takes support from in the obedience of Allah, then abandoning it is not from the prescribed asceticism; rather, what is prescribed is abandoning the surplus that preoccupies from the obedience of Allah and His Prophet. Likewise, during the second century, they began to describe that with the word Sufi because the wearing of wool (*suf*) is predominant among the ascetics...

3] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu‘a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 70:

As to those who came later, the [word] *faqir* in their nomenclature is the name for the wayfarer (*salik*) heading towards Allah Most High, as is also the Sufi in their terminology. Then, among them is he who gives preference to the word Sufi over the word *faqir* because the Sufi has corrected the esoteric and the exoteric; and among them is he who prefers the word *faqir* since, according to him, the *faqir* has broken all connections and is not, exoterically, preoccupied with issues that are not necessary. This debate is to do with semantics and terminology.

The truth is that the praiseworthy meaning of both these names (*faqir* and Sufi) are included within the words *siddiq*, *wali*, *salih* and other similar words that appear in the Book and the Sunnah, and when it (the praiseworthy meaning) enters the Prophetic names then the ruling mentioned within the Prophet’s teachings (*risalah*) shall firmly apply. As to those matters by which these words are given distinction, namely the said person is considered superior when it is not a cause of superiority,

or those issues on account of which one considers the said the person to be a *wali* and other similar matters which cause an increased rank in faith and the world, then these matters are void in Shari‘ah except when they are from among those issues that are permissible such as handicrafts. There is no problem in this on the condition that one does not believe that these permissible matters are recommended. As to that which has been adjoined to that, namely that which is disliked in the religion of Allah in terms of various types of innovations and sinfulness, it is necessary to forbid them as has been mentioned in the Shari‘ah.

4] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu‘a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 194:

There is nothing by which the *walis* of Allah are, exoterically, set apart from people from those matters that are permissible; hence, they are not set apart on account of one garment or another when both are permissible, nor with shaving the head or shortening or platting it when it is permissible. It is as it is said, “So many *siddiqs* are dressed in *qaba* and so many heretics are dressed in the *abba*”.^[6] Rather, the *walis* are found in all of the groups within the Ummah of Muhammad

ﷺ as long as they are not from the people of apparent innovation and sin. They are found among the people of the Qur’an and the people of knowledge, and among the people of Jihad and sword, and among traders, craftsmen and husbandmen. Allah has mentioned the qualities of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ in His saying, “*Your Lord knows that you stand (in prayer) for nearly two thirds of the night, and (at times) for half of it, and (at times) for one third of it, and (so do) a group of those who are with you. And Allah measures the night and the day. He knows that you (O Muslims,) cannot do it in a regular way; therefore He turned to you in mercy. Now, recite as much of the Qur’an as is easy (for you). He knows that some of you may be sick, and others travelling in the land, seeking the grace of Allah, and yet others fighting in Allah’s way. Therefore, recite as much of it as is easy*”. (Al-Muzammil: 20)

The Salaf used to call the people of religion and knowledge *al-Qurra*, and the scholars and ascetics were included among them. The name Sufi and *fuqara* (s. *faqir*) was created thereafter. The name Sufi is attributed to the wearing of wool (*suf*), this is correct. It is said that it is attributed to *safwah al-fuqaha* (the choicest from the jurists), and it is said to Sufah bin Addi bin Tabikhah, an Arabian tribe that used to be known for asceticism. It is said that it is attributed to the Ahl al-Suffah (People of the Platform), Mount Safa, the word *al-safwah* (the selected

ones) and it is said to *al-saff al-muqaddam* (the foremost rank) in front of Allah Most High. These opinions are weak for if it were like this then it would be said *saf-fi*, *safa'i*, *safawi* or *suffi* and not Sufi.

The name *fuqara* has also begun to mean the people of Suluk and this is a recent usage. People are in dispute as to which is superior: the word Sufi or the word *faqir*. They are also in dispute which is superior: the wealthy person who is thankful or the poor person who is patient...

5] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu'a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 320, after a delicate discussion regarding *khariq*:

Hence, in summary that which ruptures the natural order of things (*khariq*)^[7] is of three types: praiseworthy in religion, blameworthy in religion, and permissible—not praiseworthy or blameworthy—in the religion. If the permissible has a benefit then it is a blessing and if it does not have a benefit then it is like the other permissible actions in which there is no benefit such as playing and futile pursuits.

Abu 'Ali al-Juzjani^[8] said: “Be a seeker of steadfastness, not a seeker of miracles for indeed your carnal self (*nafs*) is predisposed to seek miracles and your Lord seeks steadfastness from you”. Shaykh Suhrawardi has mentioned in his *'Awarif [al-Ma'arif]*: “And that which he has mentioned is a major principle in this matter and a secret that many of the people of Suluk and seekers are unaware of”. That is because those who toil and worship have heard of the early pious predecessors and the miracles and *khariq* that they were bestowed with; as a result, their souls continuously seek some of that and they desire to receive some of that. Perhaps one of them remains heartbroken and accuses his self in regards to the correctness of his action when nothing from that appears to him. If they were to know the secret of that, then they would attach no importance to it and they would know that Allah opens a door from that on some of those who sincerely strive. Its wisdom is that he increases in erudition on account of the *khariq al-'adah* that he sees and the effects of the power. Hence, his resolve for asceticism in the world and remaining away from the beckoning of desires becomes strong.

At times, firm conviction (*sidq al-yaqin*) appears to some of his slaves and the veils are removed from their hearts. He who experiences *sidq al-yaqin* has no need to see something that is *khariq al-'adah* because the purpose of that (the latter) is to acquire firm conviction and that has been gained. If the person who has been bestowed with firm conviction were

to experience any of that (*khariq*) then [his] conviction would increase. The wisdom of revealing the ability to perform a *khariq al-'adah* at this juncture does not mean that he (the one from who it originates) is in need of it, rather the wisdom behind it is to reveal it for another person at a place of his need. This second person will be more able and worthy than the first. Hence, the way of the sincere person is to seek steadfastness from the soul and that is in its entirety a miracle. Then, if a *khariq [al-'adah]* were to occur in his journey then it will be as if it did not happen. He will not care and will not become deficient because of that. He only becomes deficient by neglecting the necessary right of steadfastness. Know this for indeed it is a great principle for the seekers, ascetic scholars and Sufi *shaykhs*.

6] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu'a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 338, after a delicate discussion regarding *khariq*:

As to the way [of acquiring knowledge] through means that are rational (*'aqli*), transmitted (*naqli*), revealed (*kashfi*), information (*khabari*) and speculative (*nazri*), the way of the People of Hadith (*ahl al-hadith*), the People of Kalam (theology) and the People of Tasawwuf has been that people have contended with each other in this in support and against. Among the people are those who have objected from it that which they did not recognise, and among them were those who exceeded the limit in that which they recognised and so they raised it above its worth and negated everything else. The people of Kalam and philosophers exalt the rational paths, much of which is corrupt and contradictory. Out of the creation of Allah they are the most in contradiction and dispute, each group refutes the other in that which they claim as being definite.

A group which claims [to follow] the Sunnah and hadith derive proof in that from fabricated hadiths and stories that they know are lies. At times, they take proof from something that is weak (*da'if*) in opposition of something that is strong. Many of the Sufis and *faqirs* are reared on dreams, spiritual taste (*dhawq*) and thoughts which they believe are *kashf* when they are actually thoughts that are not correct and ideas that are untrue. "*They only follow conjecture, and conjecture is of no avail in (the matter of) truth*". (*Al-Najm*: 28)

We say: As to the ways of [of acquiring knowledge] of the rulings of Shari'ah, regarding which we speak of in the principles of *fiqh*, then—by consensus of the Muslims—they include the Book [of Allah]. None of

the *imams* have disputed this as some of the deviants have in deriving proof in some issues relating to creed.

The second is the Sunnah (hadiths) that is *mutawatir*^[9] and which does not oppose the apparent meaning of the Qur'an but explains it, such as the number of prayers (Salah) and the units of prayer (*rak'ah*), the required amount (*nisab*) for Zakah [to be compulsory] and its being compulsory, the descriptions of the Hajj and the 'Umrah, and other rulings that cannot be known without the explanation of the Sunnah...

The third way is the [acts of] Sunnah narrated *mutawatir* from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that have been accepted by the people of knowledge or through reliable transmitters. This, also, is from among that the following of which the people of knowledge from the people of *fiqh*, hadith, Tasawwuf and the majority of people of knowledge are agreed. Some of the people of Kalam have rejected that and many of them have rejected that knowledge is acquired from any of them. They have only made knowledge compulsory and have not differentiated between what is received with acceptance and what is not...

The fourth way is Consensus (*ijma'*) and that is, in sum, agreed on by the majority of Muslims from the jurists, the Sufis, the people of hadith and Kalam, and others. Some of the people of innovation from the Mutazilites and the Shiites have rejected it. However, what is known regarding it is that this is that on which the Companions were. As to that which came after then acquiring knowledge from that is not, in the main, possible...

The fifth way is analogy (*qiyas*) on a text (*nass*) and the Consensus, and this is a [source of] proof according to the majority of the jurists. However, many of the people of *rai* (independent opinion) exceeded the limits in this so much that they used it before discussing the text, refuted text using it and used it for wrong. From among the people of Kalam, the people of hadith and the people of analogy there are those who reject it totally and this is a major issue; the truth in relation to it lies in moderation between exceeding the limit and being lax.

The sixth way is Presumption of Continuity (*istishab*)^[10] which is that the matter remains as it is as long as its establishment or negation in Shari'ah is not known. It is, by consensus, a proof (*hujjah*) when the matter is unknown. However, is it [a source of] proof when it is known there is nothing? In this there is a difference of view...

The seventh way is *Masalih Mursalah*^[11] which is that the *mujtahid* considers that an action will attract an overriding benefit (*jalb al-manfa'ah*) and within the Shari'ah there is nothing to negate it. In this way, there is a famous difference of opinion and so the jurists call it *Masalih Mursalah*; and among them are those who called it *rai* and some of them consider *Istihsan* to be close to it. The spiritual taste (*dhawq*) of the Sufis, their spiritual ecstasy (*wajd*) and their inspirations (*ilham*) are close to this. Its summary is that they discover in the speech and action a common good (*maslahah*) in their hearts and matters of religion, and experience the taste of its benefit—this is *maslahah*. However, some of the people specifically assign *Masalih Mursalah* to protecting lives, wealth, honour, intellect and religion. It is not like this. Rather, *Masalih Mursalah* is attracting a benefit and repelling harm (*daf' al-madar*), and that which they have mentioned in repelling harm in these five issues, then that is one of two types.

Attracting benefit can be in worldly and religious matters. In worldly matters this would be in social dealings and actions in which it can be said there is a common good (*maslahah*) for the creation without there being a Shar'iah prohibition. In matters of religion, this would be in much of the spiritual knowledge (*ma'arif*), spiritual states (*hal*), acts of worship and asceticism regarding which it is said there is a common good (*maslahah*) for man without there being a Shar'iah prohibition. Hence, he who has restricted the *maslahah* to punishments (*'uqubat*) in which there is repelling of harm in those situations to only protect the body, then the person has restricted [the matter].

This is a great chapter, focusing on it is necessary as great disorder has occurred within the religion on account of it and many of the rulers, scholars and worshippers have observed *maslahah* which they used on the basis of this principle. At times, there is within its usage that which is prohibited in Shari'ah and which they did not know and at times words that are contrary to the texts have been given preference over the *masalih mursalah*. Many of them have been careless in *maslahah*, the consideration of which according to Shari'ah is compulsory on the basis that the Shari'ah has not related that and, as a result, the obligatory and preferred actions have been lost or the person slips into that which is prohibited and disliked. At times, the Shari'ah has mentioned that and the person did not know.

7] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu'a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 381:

He was asked: Which is preferred—remedying that which Allah dislikes from your heart, for example jealousy, malice, spite, pride, ostentation, desire for good reputation, showing off actions, hardness of heart and other actions that are specifically concerned with the heart in terms of its dirtiness and wickedness, or being preoccupied with the exoteric actions such as prayer (*salah*), fasting, and the various acts of drawing close such as the supererogatory prayers (*nafl*) and those actions that have been pledged while those [evil] matters exist in his heart? Answer us, may you be rewarded.

He responded—may Allah have mercy on him: All praise is for Allah. What is necessary on him from those matters? Surely, what is most necessary is exceeding and increasing. It is as Allah Most High has said as narrated by His Prophet ﷺ: “My slave does not draw near to me by means of those actions that I have made compulsory on him”. He said: “My slave keeps drawing near to me by means of supererogatory acts of worship (*nafl*) until I love him”. The exoteric actions are not correct and accepted except by means of the action of the heart, for the heart is the king and the limbs are its army. So, if the king were to be foul then his army would become foul and it is because of this that the Prophet ﷺ said: “Be attentive, surely in the body is a piece of flesh, if it is correct then the body in its entirety will be correct and if it is corrupt then the body in its entirety would be corrupt”. Likewise, the actions of the heart will definitely affect the actions of the body. When what is a priority is more compulsory, regardless of whether it is known as the esoteric (*batin*) or exoteric (*zahir*), then at times what is known as the esoteric is more compulsory such as abandoning jealousy and pride as that is more compulsory for him than supererogatory fasts. At times that which is known as the exoteric is more superior such as the prayer of the night, for indeed it is more superior than just abandoning some of the thoughts (*khatir*) that pass on the heart, namely from the genre of envy and its like. Each of the esoteric and exoteric actions supports the other and prayer (*salah*) prevents sins and wrong and creates serenity and other great effects. It is the greatest of actions along with giving charity. And Allah is the most knowledgeable.

8] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu‘a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 395:

He was asked: What is the wisdom in that those preoccupied with *dhikr*, meditation (*fikr*), spiritual exercises (*riyadah*), struggling with the carnal self (*mujahadah al-nafs*) and similar things—in spite of their less

knowledge and the ignorance of some of them—experience *kashf* and miracles (*karamah*) and other things such as spiritual states (*hal*) that are not experienced by those who are preoccupied with knowledge and its teaching? What is the discussion regarding this? This is such that if a person was to spend the night focused and preoccupied in *dhikr* and the presence [of Allah], he would definitely see an incident or something would open up to him, and if he were to spend the night repeating a chapter from the chapters of *fiqh* then he would not find that. The situation is such that many of the worshippers find a sweetness and bliss in *dhikr* that they do not find in the recitation of the Qur'an even though the Sunnah has narrated the superiority of the scholar over the worshipper; this is especially the case when the worshipper is in need of knowledge to an extent that the scholar is distracted from worship in the preoccupation of knowledge.

It is mentioned in the hadith, “Indeed, the angels place their wings for the seeker of knowledge in happiness of what the seeker does, indeed the scholars are the inheritors of the prophets, indeed the superiority of the scholar over the worshipper is like the superiority of the moon over all stars”. It is in a hadith narrated from the Prophet ﷺ that he said: “On the Day of Judgment, Allah Most High will say to the worshippers and the *mujahids*, ‘Enter Paradise’. So the scholars will say that it was through the excellence of our knowledge that they worshipped and did Jihad. So Allah Most High will say to them, ‘You are for Me like my angles, intercede’. They shall then intercede and enter Paradise”. There are other hadiths and narrations [like this].

Then, many of the worshippers prefer worship over seeking knowledge in spite of their ignorance of that which invalidates much of their worship such as those things that nullify ablution or prayer and fasts. At times, some of them narrate stories pertaining to this: Such as Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyyah—may Allah have mercy on her—came one night to al-Quds and performed prayer until the morning and on one side was a house in which there was a jurist who was repeating a chapter on the *fiqh* of menstruation until the morning. In the morning, Rabi'ah said to him: “What is this. Many have reached their Lord and you are preoccupied with the menstruation of women”. Or she said something like this. So, what is it that prevents those preoccupied with knowledge from gaining that which those preoccupied with worship acquire in spite of their superiority over them?

He replied: All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. There is no doubt that he who is granted knowledge and faith is greater in rank than those who have only been bestowed faith, as the Book and the Sunnah indicate that. Praiseworthy knowledge towards which the Book and the Sunnah indicate is that knowledge which is the inheritance of the prophets, as the Prophet ﷺ said: “Indeed, the scholars are the heirs of the prophets. Indeed the prophets do not leave inheritance in the form of *dirhams* or *dinars*, they only leave in inheritance knowledge and so he who takes that has taken a great portion”.

This knowledge is of three types: The knowledge of Allah, His names and His attributes, and that what is concerned with that. In example of this, Allah revealed *Surah al-Ikhlās*, *Ayat al-Kursi* etc. The second is knowledge in which Allah has informed of those issues that have passed, those matters that will come and what is happening in the present. By way of example of this, Allah has revealed the verses containing stories, pledges, warnings, the descriptions of paradise and hell etc. The third is that knowledge pertaining to what Allah has commanded from those matters related to the hearts and the limbs, namely bringing faith on Allah, the knowledge of the hearts and their spiritual conditions (*ḥāl*), the utterances of the limbs and their actions. In it is knowledge of the core matters of faith and the principles of Islam, and also knowledge relating to exoteric speech and actions; this knowledge includes in it what is found in the books of the jurists namely the knowledge of the rulings of external actions, for indeed that is a minute part of the knowledge of faith in the way that the revelations (*kashf*) that happen to the people of purity is a minute part of the knowledge pertaining to matters of existence.

The people are only erring in these issues because they understand the denotations of the nomenclature that appear in the Book and the Sunnah, yet do not understand the realities of the issues at hand. Many a person memorises the various forms of knowledge, the greatest of which is memorising the Qur’an, even though he may not understand it and not even have faith, by which he may be distinguished over he who has been given the Qur’an and not memorised various forms of

knowledge as the Prophet ﷺ said in a hadith that all have agreed on (*muttafaq ‘alayh*): “The like of a believer who reads the Qur’an is like the citron, its taste is pleasant and its smell is pleasant. The example of a believer who does not recite the Qur’an is like that of a date, it has no smell, though its taste is sweet. The example of a hypocrite who recites the Qur’an is that of a sweet smelling flower, it has fragrance but has a

bitter taste. The example of a hypocrite who does not read the Qur'an is like a wild gourd. It has a bitter taste and no smell".

So, at times a man may have memorised the letters of the Qur'an and its Surahs and he may not be a believer but a hypocrite; so the believer who has not memorised its letters and Surahs is better than him even though others benefit from that hypocrite in the way benefit is drawn from the sweet smelling flower. As to he who has been granted knowledge and faith, he is a knowledgeable believer; he is superior to the believer who is not equal to him in knowledge in the way they are equal in faith. This is a principle the knowing of which is imperative.

Here is another principle: Not every action which results in *kashf* or supernatural control over things (*tasarruf*) in the world is superior than the action that does not result in *kashf* and *tasarruf*. Indeed, if the *kashf* and *tasarruf* are not helpful to the religion of Allah, then they are means of enjoying the worldly life. At times, they are acquired by the disbelievers from among the polytheists and the People of the Book, and not acquired by the people of faith who are the people of Paradise, while those are the people of fire.

The excellence of actions and their higher levels are not gained through the likes of this and are only gained through the guidance of the Book and the Sunnah. It is because of this that many actions allow for the performer to gain in the world a high ranking and wealth. The most noble of the creation according to Allah are the most Allah fearing. He who worships Allah without knowledge has done more harm than good even though he has acquired *kashf* and *tasarruf* and even though a large number of the masses follow him. We have discussed this in detail at its place, and this is the second principle.

The third principle is that the superiority of one action over another at times will be absolute, such as the superiority of the fundamental act (*asl*) of religion over it's a subsidiary act (*far'*), and at times [this superiority is] conditional. Hence, in respect to Zayd, one of two actions may be superior to the other, and the other may be superior in respect to 'Amr. At times they may both be equal in respect to one man and at times that which is inferior may at times be superior than that which is [normally] superior; at times for the person who is capable of it and would be able to benefit from it that which is inferior will be greater than that which is superior for the person who is not of that condition.

Its example is that the recitation of the Qur'an is superior than just mentioning the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Consensus of the Ummah—and there is no consideration for those ignorant slaves who oppose that. Then, reciting the Qur'an is not allowed in bowing and prostration, in those postures it is *dhikr* that is commanded. Likewise, *dhikr* and supplication in the Tawaf and 'Arafah etc are superior to reading the Qur'an. Likewise, the religiously ordained *dhikr*—such as what is said when the Call to Prayer is heard, at the time of entering and leaving the mosque and the home, when a rooster or a donkey are heard etc—are superior than reciting the Qur'an at those times. The majority of the wayfarers (*saliks*) when they recite the Qur'an do not understand it. They have not tasted the sweetness of faith (*iman*) with which the Qur'an may increase them in faith. So, when they turn to *dhikr*, the *dhikr* gives them the sweetness and taste of faith and so the *dhikr* is more beneficial for them at that moment than reciting what they do not understand. Nor do they have in faith that which increases with the recitation of the Qur'an. When the man is given faith the Qur'an increases him in this, something which cannot be gained just by *dhikr*. This is the third principle.

The fourth principle is that the man at times carries out a superior action without fulfilling its condition and there is no sincerity in it. So, on account of its conditions being lost he is less than he who properly carries out an action that is less superior. These principles and their like clarify the answer of this questioner even though paper is not enough for the details of that. And Allah is the most knowledgeable.

9] Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah mentions in *Majmu'a al-Fatawa* Vol. 11, p. 433, mentions after a delicate discussion regarding *khariq*:

Shaykh al-Islam was asked regarding the hadith narrated about the *abdal*—is it *sahih*^[12] or *maqtu'*?^[13] And are the *abdal* particularly in the Levant (al-Sham)? Or is it the case that wherever the distinct features of Islam are established with the Book and the Sunnah, the *abdal* will be there, in the Levant and other lands? Is it correct that the *wali* may be sat in a group and his body is absent?

What do the respected scholars say regarding these names which are used to describe a group from those attributed to the faith and erudition, they say this is a *ghawth al-aghwath*, this is a *qutub al-aqtab*, this is

the *qutub al-‘alam*, this is *al-qutub al-kabir*, and this is *khatim al-awliya* (the seal of the *walis*)?

He responded: As to the names that are prevalent on the tongues of many of the ascetics and the lay masses such as the *ghawth* (helper) who is in Makkah, the forty *awtad* (pegs), the seven *qutub* (pivots), the forty *abdāl* (substitutes), the three hundred *najibs* (deputies), these names are not present in the Book of Allah Most High and nor are they also narrated from the Prophet ﷺ with a *sahih* chain of narration, nor does the weak hadith (*da‘if*) bear the word *abdāl*.

They have been narrated in the Hadith of the Levant (*hadith Shami*) which is *munqati‘i* ^[14] in its chain of narration from ‘Ali bin Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) who attributes (*marfu‘*) it to the Prophet ﷺ that he said: “Indeed, among them—meaning the people of the Levant—there are *abdāl*, forty men. Whenever a man dies Allah Most High will replace him with another man in his place”. These names are not found in the speech of the predecessors as they are in this order, nor are they narrated according to this order and meanings from the *shaykhs* who are accepted widely by the Ummah. These descriptions are only found from some of those followers of the *shaykhs*, and they only said this to give them preference over others or as a reminder.

This and knowledge similar to it has become, for many of those of the latter times, obscure with what is wrong. Hence, in it there is truth which has to be accepted and falsehood that needs to be rejected. Many of the people are in opposition on both sides. There is a group that has falsified everything in it because they found some falsehood in it. There is a group that has verified as the truth everything in it because they found some truth in it. The correct is only to verify what is the truth and falsify the falsehood...

As to the word *al-ghawth* and *al-ghiyath*, only Allah is in need of it for He is the Aider of all who seek His help (*ghiyath al-mustaghithin*) and it is impermissible for anyone to seek aid from anyone aside from Him, not even a close angle and or a sent prophet...

As to the *awtad*, it is at times found in the speech of some that they say: Such a person is from the *awtad*. Meaning that Allah Most High has, by him, established faith and the religion in the hearts of those who Allah guided by him in the way He establishes the earth with

its *awtad* (mountains). This meaning is established for everyone who has this quality from the scholars; therefore, each person on account of who knowledge and faith has been established in the majority of people is on the standing of a great peg and a large mountain—he who is of a less ranking view him as such. That is not confined to four, or less or more, rather they have considered them four by comparing with the opinion of astrologers regarding the earth's pegs.

As to the *qutub*, it is also found in their speech that such a person is from among the *aqtab* (plural of *qutub*) or that such a person is a *qutub*. Hence, each person around who revolves an issue pertaining to religion or the world, exoterically or esoterically, is a *qutub* of that matter and its pivot. This is regardless of whether that which revolves around him is the affair of his home, his street, his village or his city, or relates to the matter of his religion and worldly life, esoterically or exoterically. There is no specifying of this meaning into seven, or any less or more. However, what is praised in relation to this is the person who is the pivot for the improvement of both worldly and religious matters, not just the improvement of religious matters—he is a *qutb* in their terminology. Hence, in some eras there is agreement that a man is the most superior of the people of his era. At times, there is agreement in another era that two or three are equal in excellence according to Allah. It is not necessary that there is in an era one individual who is unconditionally the most superior of the creation according to Allah...

Those who have spoken regarding the name *badl* (pl. *abdal*) explain it through several meanings. Among them is that they are the replacement (*badl*) of the prophets, and among those meanings is that each time a man from among them dies, Allah Most High replaces in his place with another man. Among those meanings is that they have replaced the bad qualities of their manners and actions and beliefs with good qualities. These ascriptions, all of them, are not specific to forty, nor to less or more. Nor are they confined to the people of one land on earth. And by this the meaning of the word *nujaba* also becomes apparent...

And, among the Allah fearing *walis* of Allah, the sincere and pious slaves of Allah, and His Prophets that have been sent, there is no one who is constantly absent in body from the sight of people, rather this is from the category of the speech of those who say that indeed 'Ali is in the clouds, Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyyah is in Mount Radwa [near Yanbu], that Muhammad bin al-Hasan is in a cellar (*sardab*) in [the city of] Samarra, al-Hakim is in the mountains of Egypt and that the forty *abdal* are unseen men in the mountains of Lebanon. All of this and its like are from

the speech of the people of falsehood and lies. Yes, it is the case that something contrary to the habit takes place relating to an individual who may at times disappear from the people's sight either to repel an enemy from himself or for another reason. As for him to remain like this his entire life, then this is falsehood. Yes, the radiance of his heart, the guidance of his mind and what is in there, namely the secrets of Allah Most High, His trust, light and knowledge (*ma'rifah*) is hidden from the eyes of people. His piety and nearness to Allah (*wilayah*) is hidden from most people and this is actually the case. The secrets of Allah are between Him and His *walis*, the majority of people do not know.

10] *Majmu' Fatawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah* (compiled and codified by 'Abdur-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Qasim al-'Asimi al-Najdi al-Hanbali with the help of his son, Muhammad). First edition: 1381 AH, Matba'ah al-Riyadh. Vol. 10, p. 5:

In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. All praise is for Allah alone, and peace and blessing on he after whom there is no prophet. All praise is for Allah, we seek His aid, we seek His forgiveness, and we seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our selves and the wickedness of our actions. He who Allah guides then there is none who can mislead him, and he who He misleads then there is none who can guide him. We testify that there is no deity save Allah alone, He has no partners, and we testify that Muhammad is His slave and His messenger, may Allah bless him and his followers and grant peace.

Proceeding thereafter: these are a few sentences regarding the actions of hearts which are called Stations (*maqam*) and Spiritual States (*hal*), and they are from the conditions of faith and the principles of the religion such as love of Allah and His messenger, relying on Allah, sincerity in religion, thanking Him, bearing patience on His judgment, fearing Him, and entertaining hope in Him and that which follows that.

Some of those from the people of faith whose right Allah has made incumbent necessitated that and asked for it to be written. All of us were hasty [in having it written]. Hence, I say that all of these actions are necessary on the entire creation—those who are fundamentally commanded—through the agreement of the *imams* of religion.

People, in relation to them, are of three levels as they are of three levels in relation to the actions of the body: a tyrant on himself (*zalim li nafsih*), moderate (*muqtasid*) and the one who hastens in good actions (*sabiq bi*

al-khayrat). The *zalim* is the one who is disobedient by abandoning that which has been commanded or doing that which has been warned against; the *muqtasid* is he who fulfils the incumbent actions and leaves that which is forbidden; and the *sabiq* is he who draws close through those actions which he is able to perform such as the incumbent and recommended actions and by abandoning that which is forbidden and disliked. This is the situation even if the *muqtasid* and the *sabiq* may at times have sins which are erased through repentance—“*Surely Allah loves those who are most repenting, and loves those who keep themselves pure*” (2:222)—or through actions that erase sins or difficulties that annul sins or something else.

Both of the two types—the *muqtasid* and the *sabiq*—are from the friends of Allah who He has mentioned in His Book: “*Listen, the friends of Allah shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve—those who have believed and have been fearful of Allah*” (10:62-63). The boundary of the friends (*walis*) of Allah is those believers who are fearful of Allah (*muttaqin*). However, that is divided into types: the general [*walis*] and they are those who are *muqtasid* and the special [*walis*] and they are the *sabiq*. The *sabiq* are of greater rank such as the prophets and the *siddiqs*.

The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) has mentioned both types in a hadith which al-Bukhari has narrated in his *sahih* from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) that he said, “Allah said, ‘Whoever has enmity for a *wali* of Mine, then he has announced war with Me. My slave does not draw close to Me with anything more beloved to Me than the duties I have obligated upon him. My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory deeds until I love him. When I Love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees and his hand with which he touches and his leg with which he walks. With Me he hears, with Me he sees, with Me he touches and with Me he walks. If he were to ask Me then I will definitely give him and if he were to seek My refuge then I will surely give him refuge. I do not hesitate to do something I am going to do such as My hesitation from taking the life of My believing slave; he dislikes death and I dislike hurting him yet that is necessary for him.’”

As to the *zalim* from the people of faith, then he has that level of *wilayah* (closeness to Allah) that is commensurate to his faith and his fearing of Allah (*taqwa*); this is just like the way he is to the contrary of that according to his level of unrighteousness. This is because at times

righteousness that elicits reward and unrighteousness that elicits punishment can gather in a single person to an extent that it is possible he is rewarded and punished. This is the saying of all of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the *imams* of Islam and the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah who say that surely he who has in his heart a minute particle of faith shall not remain in the fire forever...

These esoteric actions, such as love for Allah, being sincere to Him, relying on Him (*tawakkul*), being pleased with Him etc. are all commanded in respect to the elite and common folk, abandoning them is not praiseworthy in respect to anyone, even if his standing were to increase...

However, people are divided in relation to these Stations into the elite and the common people—the elite have a special station and the common people have a common station. Its example is that the common people say that surely *tawakkul* is struggling with one's *nafs* in search of sustenance, whereas the elite do not defend the *nafs* [in search of sustenance]. They say that the one doing *tawakkul* seeks by way of it many things, whereas the knower of Allah (*'arif*) sees these matters from their peripherals and does not seek anything. Hence, it is said that the first [category] is wider than the *tawakkul* carried out in relation to the interests of the world, for the person doing *tawakkul* relies on Allah in rectifying his heart and faith, and safeguarding his tongue and intentions, and these are the most important matters for him. It is because of this that he intimately converses with his Lord in every prayer by His saying, "*It is only You that we worship and it is only You from Who we seek help,*" (1:5) and, "*So worship Him and have trust in Him,*" (11:123) and His saying, "*In Him alone I have placed my trust and to Him alone I turn in humbleness,*" (11:88 and 42:10) and His saying, "*Say, He is my Lord, there is no deity save He; in Him do I place my trust and to Him is my return.*" (13:30)

Worship and trust in Allah have been mentioned together in various places because they comprise the faith in its entirety and it is because of this that some from the predecessors said: Surely Allah has gathered all of the revealed books in the Qur'an and has gathered the knowledge of the Qur'an in the *al-Mufasssal*^[1] and he has gathered the knowledge of the *al-Mufasssal* in *al-Fatihah* and he has gathered the knowledge of *al-Fatihah* in His saying, "*It is only You that we worship and it is only You from Who we seek help.*" (1:5)

11] *Majmu' Fatawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah*. Vol. 10, p. 82:

Those *shaykhs* who wrote regarding the Sunnah mention in their beliefs remaining aloof from those who often claim love and indulge in that without fear; this is because in there is corruption in which a group of the Sufis (*mutasawwifah*) fell into. The corruption in beliefs and actions that they fell into necessitated a group totally rejecting the basis of the way of the Sufis until those who are in error became two: a group that affirmed what is correct and false in it, and a group that rejected what is correct and false in it similar to the groups of people of *kalam* and *fiqh*.^[2] What is only correct is affirming in it and in other matters that which agrees with the Book and the Sunnah and rejecting that which is in it and in other matters aside from it that which is contrary to the Book and the Sunnah.

12] *Majmu' Fatawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah*. Vol. 10, p. 337:

The annihilation (*fana*) found in the speech of the Sufis is explained in three ways. The first is annihilation in the heart from intending anything aside from the Lord, and to have trust in Him (*tawakkul*), worship Him and perform that which comes with that. This is the correct truth, pure monotheism and sincerity. This in reality is the worship of the heart and its placing trust in, seeking aid in, devoting to, returning to and turning to Allah Who is One and has no partner and that which comes with that, namely knowledge of Allah (*ma'rifah*) and spiritual states (*hal*). It is not for anyone to depart from this.

This is the sound heart regarding which Allah has said, “*Save he who comes with a sound heart.*” (26:89) This is the heart that is safe from corrupt beliefs, corrupt intentions and that which comes with that.

This annihilation is not contradictory to abiding in Allah (*baqa*), rather it and *baqa* gather together and so the slave is annihilated from intending anything apart from Him even though he is aware of Allah and that aside from Him. Its explanation is the saying of *La ilaha illallah*. The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) used to say, “There is no deity save Allah, we do not worship except him, for Him is bounty, excellence and praiseworthiness.” That, in sum, is religion from beginning to end.

The second is the annihilation of the heart from seeing anything aside from the Lord. The first was annihilation from intending [towards anything apart from Allah] and this is annihilation from witnessing. The

first was annihilation from worshiping something aside from Him and having trust in Him, and this is annihilation of knowledge of anything aside from Him and to look [only] at Him. In this annihilation there is a deficiency since witnessing realities as they are, which is witnessing the Lord Who is managing the affairs of His slave and commanding His Sacred Law, is more perfect than witnessing His existence, or a quality from His many qualities, or a name from His many names; annihilation through this [second type] would be annihilation from witnessing all aside from that.

It is because of this that the Companions were the most complete in witnessing, not that witnessing the Truth (Allah) in a holistic (*mujmal*) fashion would leave them short of seeing Him in a detailed (*mufassal*) fashion. However, much of this occurred to many of those of the latter times of this Ummah in the way death, unconsciousness, screaming and convulsion occurred to them. That is because of a heart that is weak in witnessing the realities as they are, witnessing dispersion in unity (*jam'*) and multitude in one until they differed in the possibility of that. Many of them are of the view that anything aside from that is not possible because they are of the view that when the creation or a matter is mentioned then they have become preoccupied from the Creator and Commander. When an example of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his Caliphs is presented they claim this was specific [to them], refuse to answer or express surprise at the issue.

The reason for this is that he has estimated all of the creation according to that on which he found himself and it is because of this that some of them said: Indeed, when the Truth (Allah) manifests it is not possible to hear His speech...

It is in this form of annihilation that he at times says: "I am the truth (*ana al-haqq*)," "glory to me (*subhani*)," or "there is none in this *jubbah* save Allah." This is because he is annihilated by that which he has seen from witnessing Him, by that which he has found from finding Him, by that which is mentioned from His mention, and by that which he has recognised from recognising Him (*ma'rifah*). This is like the man who was drowned in the love of another. The beloved fell into the sea and so the other threw himself behind him. So the first said, "What made you throw yourself behind me?" He responded, "You became absent with yourself from me and I then thought that you were me."

In stations like this, intoxication (*sukur*) happens which cancels the faculty of discernment (*tamyiz*) with the existence of the sweetness of faith as is obtained through the intoxication of wine and the intoxication experienced by the lover of images. Likewise, annihilation is acquired through the condition of fear or hope in the way it is acquired through the condition of love, and so the heart becomes absent from witnessing some realities. Speech or action similar to the actions of those intoxicated appear from him, this is the ecstatic utterances (*shatahat*) of some of the *shaykhs* such as the saying of some of them, "Set my tent up over Jahannam," and other similar words and actions that are contrary to the Shari'ah. At times, the person uttering them is not sinful.

13] Majmu' Fatawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah. Vol. 11, p. 510:

As to the wearing of the cloak (*khirqah*) which some of the *shaykhs* clothe the *murids*, then this is not something which has a basis on which there is reliable proof from the Book and the Sunnah, nor did the early *shaykhs* and majority of the later ones clothe their *murids*. However, a group of the latter ones saw that and considered it preferable.

Some of them have derived proof that the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) clothed the mother of Khalid bin Sa'id bin al-'As and told her, *sana*. Sana in the language of Abyssinia means good. She had been born in Abyssinia and that is why he addressed her in this tongue.

They have also derived proof from the hadith of the cloak (*burda*) which a woman weaved for the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and one of the Companions asked him regarding it and he granted it to him. He responded, "I wanted it to be my shroud."

In these two hadiths there is no proof for that which they do; for a man to grant another that which he wears is like granting him that which benefits him. His taking clothes from the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) is by way of *barakah* like taking his hair by way of *barakah*, and that is not like the wearing of clothes or a hat by way of following and emulation. However, it is similar in some ways with the kings taking off garments and bestowing them on those who they appoint as governors as if it is a hallmark and sign of governorship and nobility.

Because of this, they call it a bestowing of honours. The goal of this and its like is from the genre of that which is permissible. If a pious intention is adjoined to it then it is good from that perspective. As to making it a Sunnah and a way to Allah Most High, then the matter is not as such.

As to a group being attributed to a particular *shaykh*, then there is no doubt that people are in need of him from whom they can obtain faith and the Qur'an in the way that the Companions obtained that from the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and the Followers who obtained from them. By this, following the way of the first to accept Islam in goodness (*al-sabiq al-awwal*) is achieved. In the way man has him who teaches him the Quran and its like, likewise he has that person who teaches him the esoteric and exoteric religion.

14] *Majmu' Fatawa Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah*. Vol. 11, p. 497:

Chapter: As to what they mention regarding their excessiveness in relation to the *shaykhs*, it is necessary to know that the pious *shaykhs* that they follow in the religion follow the way of the Prophets and Messengers like the first to accept Islam from the Muhajirs and Ansar and those who followed them in goodness and those who in the Ummah have a truthful tongue.

The way of these people is to call the creation to Allah, His obedience, the obedience of His Prophet, following His Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

The purpose is that the religion in its entirety is for Allah and the word of Allah remains lofty for indeed Allah Most High says, *"I did not create the jinns and the human beings except for the purpose that they should worship Me. I do not want any sustenance from them, nor do I want them to feed Me. Surely, Allah is the All-Sustainer, Possessor of power, the Strong."* (51:56-58)

... *"And when My slaves call unto Me, then I am close, I answer the call of the caller when he calls Me."* (2:186) It is narrated from some of the Companions who said, "Oh Messenger of Allah, is our Lord close so we may whisper to Him or far so we call out to Him?" Allah Most High then revealed this verse.

He Most High is All Hearing, Close, the Answerer and Most Compassionate. He is more compassionate with His slaves than a

mother with her child. He knows the condition of slaves that others do not know and is able to fulfil their needs that others are unable to do. He has such mercy for them that others cannot have that much mercy.

The *shaykhs* who lead them, guide to Him and instruct towards Him in the way *imams* do so in Salah; they pray and people pray behind them like the guide who brings the pilgrims to the House. The guide and the *shaykhs* all head towards Him; they have no divinity, rather whoever creates for them any of that, then he is from the genre of the Christians and those who ascribe partners.

15] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah* published by Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud Islamic University (at its own cost) in 1403 AH. Part 1, page 81:

Chapter: In that which Shaykh Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri has mentioned in his famous book regarding the '*aqidah* of the Sufi *shaykhs*, he has mentioned their various anecdotes with which it is proved that they were in agreement with the beliefs of many of the Ash'ari scholars of beliefs (*kalam*). That was the belief of Abu al-Qasim who acquired that from Abu Bakr bin Furak and Abu Ishaq al-Asfarayini. The majority of this belief was in agreement with the principles of the Salaf and the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah. However, it was deficient in that and included the abandoning of some of that on which they were and an increase in opposing that on which they were.

What is established and correct from the senior *shaykhs* is in agreement to that on which the Salaf were, and this is that which it is necessary to mention. For indeed what is correct, explicit and preserved from the senior *shaykhs*, such as Fudayl bin 'Ayad, Abu Sulayman al-Darani, Yusuf bin Asbat, Hudhayfah al-Mar'ashi, Ma'ruf al-Karkhi until Junayd bin Muhammad, Sahl bin 'Abdullah al-Tustari and their like clarifies the reality of the writings of the *shaykhs*.

Several have gathered the writings of the *shaykhs* verbatim or as they understood them. Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Ishaq al-Kalabadhi wrote the book *Al-Ta'arruf li Madhahib al-Tasawwuf* which is the most excellent of that which Abu al-Qasim has mentioned, the most correct and closest to the *madhhab* of the predecessors of the Ummah, its *imams* and its senior *shaykhs*. Likewise, Mu'ammarr bin Ziyad al-Asfahani, the *shaykh* of the Sufis, and Abu 'Abdur-Rahman Muhammad bin al-Husayn al-Sulami compiled the speech of the Sufis. They were in that of

a lofty level and far from innovation (*bid'ah*) and desires (*hawa*) than Abu al-Qasim.

Abu 'Abdur-Rahman—even though he was lesser of the two men—would object to the way of the al-Kullabiyyah and would consider them to be innovators. That was the way that Abu al-Qasim supported. He (Abu 'Abdur-Rahman) has a book criticising *kalam* and opposing that which Abu al-Qasim supported. Abu 'Abdur-Rahman was the greatest of those from who Abu al-Qasim took the speech of the *shaykhs* and he relies on him in the majority of that which he narrates for indeed he has several books.

Likewise, it is not known regarding the majority of the *shaykhs* who Abu al-Qasim mentions in his *Risalah [al-Qushayri]* that any of their *shaykhs* supported the way of the al-Kullabiyyah and the al-'Asharis which Abu al-Qasim supported, rather the contrary is narrated regarding them. Whoever has been explicit from among them, then he has been explicit in their opposition, this is also the case with the *shaykhs* of his era who he names: “As to the *shaykhs* who were our contemporaries and who we met—even though we did not have the opportunity to meet them—such as the *ustadh*, the martyr, he who was most eloquent and unique of his era Abu 'Ali al-Daqqaq, the *shaykh* of his era Shaykh Abu 'Abdur-Rahman al-Sulama, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali bin Jahdam who dwelled in the Haram (*mujawir al-haram*), Shaykh Abu al-'Abbas al-Qassab in Tabrستان, Ahmad al-Aswad al-Daynwari, Abu al-Qasim al-Sayrafi in Nisapur, Abu Sahl al-Khashshab who was a great man there, Mansur bin Khalf al-Maghrabi, Abu Sa'id al-Malini, Abu Tahir al-Jahdari—may Allah sanctify their souls—and others.”

Indeed, these *shaykhs*, such as Abu al-'Abbas al-Qassab, had many famous books regarding the Sunnah and opposing the way of the Ash'ari Kullabiyyah which is not the subject here.

Likewise, the majority of the *shaykhs* of the Muslims from the earlier and latter times who are the voices of truth in the Ummah such as Shaykh Yahya bin Yusuf al-Sarsari mentioned and composed in his poetry from Shaykh 'Ali bin Idris who was his *shaykh* that he asked Qutb al-'Arifin (pole of the knowers of Allah) Abu Muhammad 'Abdul-Qadir bin 'Abdullah al-Jili.^[3] He said, “Oh my master, can there be a *wali* of Allah who is not on the belief of Ahmad bin Hanbal?” He responded, “It has never been and shall never be.”

Likewise, Shaykh Shihab al-Din Abu Hafs ‘Umar bin Muhammad al-Suhrawardi narrated, Shaykh ‘Izz al-Din ‘Abdullah bin Ahmad ‘Umar al-Faruthi that he heard this story from him; I also found it hanging [on a wall] in the handwriting of Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Din Abu Muhammad bin Qudamah al-Maqdisi. Al-Suhrawardi said, “I had decided to read some knowledge of *kalam* and I was hesitant whether I should read *Al-Irshad* by Imam al-Haramayn or *Nihayah al-Iqdam* by Shehrastani or his *shaykh*’s book. I went with my maternal uncle Abu al-Najib and he used to perform Salah next to Shaykh ‘Abdul-Qadir.” He says, “Shaykh ‘Abdul-Qadir turned to me and said, ‘Oh ‘Umar, what is the provision of the grave? What is the provision of the grave?’ I then recanted from that idea.” He informed that it was revealed (*kashf*) to the *shaykh* what was in his heart and forbade him from *kalam* to which al-Qushayri and his like affiliated themselves to.

Likewise, Shaykh Abu al-Hasan bin Ghanim narrated to me that he heard his maternal uncle Shaykh Ibrahim bin ‘Abdullah al-Armawi that he had a teacher who he used to recite to and that he recited to him the beliefs of the latter Ash‘aris. He said, “I used to go to him and my father and Shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Armini^[4] heard.” He said, “My father said, ‘What is this oh Ibrahim?’ I said that the teacher taught this. He said, ‘Oh Ibrahim, leave this. I have travelled the earth and met with this and this *wali* of Allah. I did not find any of them on this belief. I only found them on the beliefs of these.’ He then pointed to his neighbours, the people of hadith and Sunnah from the pious Jerusalamites (*maqadisah*) who were there.”^[5]

Shaykh Muhammad bin Abu Bakr bin Qawwam also narrated to me that he heard his grandfather Shaykh Abu Bakr bin Qawwam say that when it reaches you regarding the people of such a place, and Shaykh Muhammad named them to me, when it reaches you that among them is a believing man (*mu’min*) or pious man, then accept that as the truth. And when it reaches you that in them is a *wali* of Allah, then do not believe. I said, “Why not oh my master?” He said, “Because they are Ash‘ari.” That is a lengthy chapter.

Whoever looks at the beliefs of the famous *shaykhs*, such as Shaykh ‘Abdul Qadir, Shaykh ‘Adi bin Musafir, Shaykh Abu al-Bayan al-Dimashqi and others, then he would find that a lot. He will also find that he who goes towards the *madhhab* of the people of *kalam*, even if he interprets it allegorically, then there is in it a deficiency and turning away from the rank of the perfect *walis* of Allah; he will also find that he who is deficient in the knowledge of the beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunnah and its

followers and admirers, and [is deficient in the] dislike of that which is contrary to that and rebuking that, in terms of being empty of the knowledge of perfect Sunah and the belief of *bid'ah*, then you shall find him deficient from the rank of the *walis* of Allah who are firm in the knowledge of the beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunnah and its followers. "*Allah has set a measure for everything.*" (65:3)

That which Abu al-Qasim has mentioned in his *Risalah* in terms of their beliefs, manners and way, in it there is much goodness, truth and religion. However, in there is a deficiency from the way of the majority of the perfect *walis* of Allah, and they are the choicest individuals of the three generations and those who treaded their path. He has not mentioned in his book the *imams* of the *shaykhs* from the three generations. In addition to what is in his book in terms of beneficial information in terms of anecdotes and narrated matters, there are also in it hadiths, weak hadiths and those that are false. In it are ambiguous words that have true and false meanings in terms of both narration and opinion. "*Allah has set a measure for everything.*" (65:3)

Allah Most High said, "*Be upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah, even though against yourselves or parents and relatives. One may be wealthy or poor but Allah is the better caretaker of both. So do not follow desires, lest you should swerve. If you twist or avoid (the evidence), then Allah is all aware of what you do.*" (4:135)

I have written in distinguishing that which Allah has made easy and I have strived in following the path of the moderate Ummah who are witnesses over the people, not the path of those who raises the Ummah above its worth in its beliefs and Tasawwuf, but the path which is most perfect and correct which has been mentioned in terms of knowledge, situation, speech, action, beliefs and justice; nor the path of those who lowered it below its worth in terms of beliefs and Tasawwuf from those who exceed the limit in criticising the people of *kalam* or criticising the way of Tasawwuf in absolute terms. Allah is most knowledge.

16] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*. Part 1. Page 94:

Abu al-Qasim has mentioned in the biography of Shaykh Abu 'Ali bin al-Katib, and he had remained in the company of Abu 'Ali al-Rudhbari and others, and he was alive after AH340. He said, "The Mutazalites considered Allah free from faults (*tanzih*) from the perspective of intellect

and erred, whereas the Sufis did His *tanzih* from the perspective of knowledge and were correct.”

I say: Shari‘ah is what is meant by the world *‘ilm* found in the speech of the Sufis and their many advices such as Abu Ya‘qub al-Naharjuwi, “The best of spiritual conditions is that which is adjoined to knowledge.” This is like the words of Abu Yazid, “I struggled with the self (*mujahadah*) for thirty years and I found nothing more difficult on me than knowledge and following it. If it were not for the differences of the *‘ulama* I would have remained behind. The differences of the *‘ulama* is a source of mercy except in stripping bare divine unity (*tajrid al-tawhid*).”

This is like the saying of Sahl bin ‘Abdullah al-Tustari: “Every action that you do without following guidance, regardless of whether it is an act of obedience or disobedience, then this is living according to the carnal self. And each action that you do with guidance, then it is punishment on the carnal self.”

Abu Sulayman al-Darani said, “Some days, a point from the issues of the people occurs in my heart and I do not accept it except with two just witnesses: the Book and the Sunnah.”

His companion Ahmad bin Abu al-Hiwari said, “He who acts without following the Sunnah, then his action is redundant.”

Abu Hafs al-Nisapuri said, “He who does not weigh his actions and speech all the time with the Book and the Sunnah, and does not hold in suspicion his thoughts, then do not count him in the register of men.”

Junayd bin Muhammad said, “All of the paths are closed to the creation except he who follows in the steps of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).”

He also said, “He who has not preserved the Quran and written hadith then he should not follow in this matter because our knowledge is confined to the Book and the Sunnah.”

Abu ‘Uthman said, “He who appoints the Sunnah on his self as leader in speech and action, he shall speak with wisdom, whereas he who appoints desires over his self as leader in speech and action, then he shall speak of innovation. Allah Most High says, *‘If you obey him then you shall be guided.’*” (25:54) Abu Hamzah al-Baghdadi said, “He who

has learned the path to Allah, his journey shall be made easy for him, and there is no guide for the path to Allah except following the Prophet in his conditions, speech and actions.”

He who spoke of knowledge in their speech was Abu ‘Uthman al-Nisapuri, “Association with Allah should be carried out with excellent etiquettes (*husn al-adab*) and uninterrupted reverence and thought; association with the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) should be carried out by following his Sunnah and adhering to the exoteric aspects of knowledge; association with the *walis* of Allah should be carried out with respect and service; association with family should be carried out with good manners (*husn al-khalq*); association with friends should be with perpetual joy as long as there is no sin; and association with the ignorant (*juhhal*) should be with *du‘a* for mercy for them.”

Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri said, “Do not venture near he who you see claiming to be associated with Allah Most High while leaving the limits of Shar‘i knowledge.”

He also said, “The most beloved of things in our age are two: a scholar who acts on his knowledge and a knower of Allah who speaks regarding His reality.”

... Abu ‘Abdur-Rahman al-Sulami said, “I heard my grandfather Abu ‘Amr bin Nujayd say, ‘Every spiritual condition (*hal*) that is not an outcome of knowledge, its harm is greater on the individual than its benefit.’ He was asked regarding Tasawwuf, he said, ‘Patience when commanding the good and forbidding the evil.’”

The reason why they have described Shari‘ah as knowledge (*‘ilm*) is because the community are people of purpose, intention, action and spiritual states. This is their speciality. However, at times one of them acts without Shari‘ah knowledge but with that which he feels and the intention of which he finds in his heart, even though it is not legislated and commanded. This is something that many of them are embroiled in due to their preferring their knowledge of spiritual tastes (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wajd*) over the requirements of knowledge that is legislated and their acting on spiritual tastes for which there is no legislated knowledge.

There is no doubt that this is following the desires without guidance from Allah. This is that which Allah has rebuked the Christians with whom the

erring Sufis and worshippers have similarities in many matters, it is because of this that Sahl made it from the destiny of the carnal self.

Because of this Abu Yazid became weak in following knowledge for indeed struggling against the whims of the carnal self is carried out by the majority of souls such as the worship of the polytheists, the monks from the People of the Book, the worshippers of idols and their like. All of that is from this. They carry out such asceticism and struggle (*mujahadah*) in worship that is not carried out by Muslims. However, that is false and not legislated and because of this their actions do not elicit an outcome save that which they so deserve.

The sincere Muslim, when he worships Allah in that which has been legislated, Allah opens up to him the lights of guidance in a short time. The guided ones from among the *shaykhs* of the worshippers and ascetics advise following legislated knowledge in the way the people of steadfastness in knowledge advise following their knowledge which the people of steadfastness from the worshippers and the ascetics tread. As to those who have strayed from the two groups, they reject what is legislated: either in terms of knowledge or actions, both of which is the way of those who have attracted [Allah's] anger and the deviant.

Sufayn bin 'Uyayanah said, "They used to say, 'He who has become corrupt from the *'ulama* has a likeness with the Jews, and he who is corrupt from the worshippers has a likeness with the Christians.'"

As a result, Abu al-Qasim intended to refute them in *Al-Risalah* [*al-Qushayriyyah*]. When he mentioned the *shaykhs* who mentioned them, he wrote, "This is the mention of a group of the *shaykhs* of this circle. The purpose of mentioning them at this point is to caution that they were in consensus on venerating the Shari'ah, adorned with treading the path of spiritual struggle, in agreement on following the Sunnah, not void of any of the etiquettes of religiousness, agreed that he who is void of [correct] dealings and spiritual struggle and has not established his situation on the foundation of piety and fear of Allah (*taqwa*) is devising a lie against Allah Most High in that which he claims, such an individual is deviated from the right path, destroyed in his self and a cause of destruction for those who have been enamoured by him from those who have been inclined to his falsehood."

When the meaning of the word knowledge in their terminology is known, then [we can understand] the saying of Abu 'Ali bin al-Katib that "the

Sufis declared Him free from impurity and imperfection (*tanzih*) in terms of knowledge,” in other words from the perspective of Shari‘ah which is the Book and the Sunnah; they declared Allah free from that which He made Himself free from. They were correct in this. As to the Mutazalites, they did His *tanzih* through the analogy of their intellects and whims. They intended to negate from Him all of the attributes that are present due to their assumption that this is anthropomorphism (*tashbih*). They were not guided to understand that the Creator is described with that which befits Him and that the creation is described with that which befits it, and that attributing the name, even though it is agreed on, to Allah makes it special and confines it to that from which the likeness of the creation is negated.

That which Shaykh Abu ‘Ali has mentioned that the Sufis oppose the Mutazalites is an issue on which there is agreement for indeed the principles of the Sufis do not agree with negating the attributes of Allah (*sifat*), rather they are the most distant of people from l‘tīzal in *sifat* and destiny (*qadr*).

17] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*. Part 1, page 144:

Abu al-Qasim mentioned without a chain (*isnad*) from Junayd that he said, “Indeed, the first thing that the slave is in need of in terms of correct belief is the creation to know his Creator and how the temporal (*muhdath*) came into existence; by this he will recognise the attributes of the Creator from the created and that which is eternal from that which is temporary. He will humble himself to His call and admit the necessity of obeying Him for indeed he who has not recognised that which is for Allah, has not admitted the kingdom for He who deserves it.”

This excellent speech is appropriate for Junayd; this speech includes differentiating between the created and the Creator so that the *salik* does not fall into unification (*ittihad*) and incarnationism (*hulul*) as many groups have. He has mentioned two principles: firm belief and submission, because *iman* is speech and actions; he mentioned knowing the Creator, humbling to His call and admitting the necessity of obeying Him.

This is from the principles of the Ahl al-Sunnah and the *imams* of the *shaykhs*, especially the Sufi *shaykhs*, for indeed the basis of their way is intention which is the basis of action; they are in intention, worship, actions and manners the most grounded among them in

speech and knowledge, and in respect to that they are the most diligent and most focused, rather he who has not entered into that is not from the people of *tariq* in any way.

18] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*. Part 1, page 163:

The Sufis, among them are the correct and incorrect as are found in those aside from them. They are not in that greater than the Companions and the Followers, and no one is infallible in everything that he says except the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

19] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*, part 1, page 212:

This issue, i.e. the issue of the definition of words, all of the Muslim groups have disapproved of it, even the *fuqaha* and scholars of *fiqh* principles (*usul*). The writers on the principles of *fiqh* are on the *mathhab* of Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi'i and Ahmad; they mention words and its types such as the imperative (*amr*), the negative command (*nah*i), the predicate (*khabr*) and that which is general and particular. They say that these forms fall under the word *kalam* according to all of the groups of the Ummah—its scholars of *usul*, jurists, hadith scholars and Sufis^[6]—except these people. So, how can this statement be attributed to the scholars of *usul* in a general and particular fashion?

20] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*. Part 1, page 221:

Because of this, you find dislike between the *fuqaha* and the Sufis, and between the *'ulama* and the *fuqara* in this way. What is correct is that all of those communities are praised whose condition is that which Allah and His Messenger praised as mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah, and that all of those communities are disapproved whose condition is that which Allah and His Messenger has disapproved of as mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah. The Muslim should strive in realising His words, "*Guide us to the straight path, the path of those You have favoured, not of those who earn Your anger nor of those who go astray.*" (1:6-7) The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "The Jews are the ones who earned anger and the Christians are those went astray."

21] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*, part 2, page 15, while commenting on a story that Imam Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri

mentioned regarding Abu Bakr al-Shibli and Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri in which there is some *shatahat*.^[7]

The like of these words and stories are not befitting to be mentioned for following or treading the path and way (*tariqah*) as they contain that which is contrary to the command of Allah and His Prophet. The person from who the like of these issues originate is either excused due to the limitations in his *ijtihad* or absence in his mind whereas those who follow him are not excused as the truth and path is clear. Even if his sin is forgiven, because good intention and pious action are attached to it, it is necessary to explain that which is praiseworthy from that which is disapproved of so that truth does not become mixed with falsehood.

Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri and Abu Bakr al-Shibli (Allah's mercy on them) were known to have at times altered minds, so much that al-Shibli went to hospital twice. Al-Nuri (may Allah have mercy on him) was in it and he was for it. He died in a densely marshy area because spiritual rapture (*wajd*) had overtaken him and his mind was lost. He whose condition is like this is unsuitable to be followed in a situation that is not in agreement with the command of Allah and His Prophet, even if the person is excused or forgiven, and even if he has a great ranking in terms of faith, piety, sincerity and praiseworthy stations. In that he is no greater than those who were first in bringing faith from the Migrants and Helpers (Muhajir and Ansar) and those who followed them in goodness for indeed they are followed in obedience and they are only mentioned in a beautiful way. In terms of that sin or *ta'wil* that they did, which is not what Allah and His Messenger commanded, they shall not be followed in that. This is the principle the following of which is imperative.

22] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*. Part 2, page 56:

Abu al-Qasim said, "Know that it is the way of Allah with His *walis* that when they share quarters [in the heart] with something that is apart from Him (*ghayr*) or ponder on something [apart from him] or they allow their heart to be intimate with something [apart from him], then the matter becomes confusing for them and Allah becomes jealous of their hearts so that they sincerely return to His Self, free from that which they had allowed to dwell with them."

He said, "I heard al-Sulami say, I heard Abu Zayd al-Marwazi the jurist say, I heard Ibrahim bin Sinan say, I heard Muhammad bin Hassan say, 'While I was traversing the mountain of Lebanon a young man came

towards us. The hot air and wind had burnt him. When he saw me he turned and fled. I followed him and said to him, "Advise me something." He responded, "Fear Him, for indeed He is very jealous and does not like to see in the heart of His slave anything aside from Him."""

He said, "I heard al-Sulami say, I heard al-Nasrabadhi say, 'Allah is very jealous, and among his jealousy is that he has not made a path apart from Him.'"

I say that this jealousy is included in that jealousy which the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) described when he said, "Allah's jealousy is that the believer should not go to that which Allah has forbidden for him." The greatest sin is that you make a partner for Allah and He has created you and that you make another deity with Him. There is major polytheism and subtle polytheism. Those who are in the middle carry out the necessary monotheism (*tawhid*) and those who have gone ahead and drawn near carry out the recommended aspects along with the necessary aspect. There is nothing more beloved to Allah than monotheism and there is nothing more hated for Him than polytheism. It is because of this that polytheism is not forgiven, rather it is the greatest oppression.

The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "The example of a believer is that of a fresh tender plant, which the wind bends sometimes and at other times it makes it straight. And the example of a hypocrite is that of a cedar tree which keeps straight till it is uprooted suddenly."

So, Allah Most High afflicts His believing slave with difficulties so that He may purify him from sins and shortcomings; it is from His mercy on His sincere slave that He turns him away from that which He feels jealous of. It is as Allah Most High mentions, "*Thus We did, to turn evil and lewdness away from him. Surely, he was one of Our chosen servants.*" (12:24), and as He said, "*He is such that he has no authority over those who believe and place trust in their Lord.*" (16:99) So, when He removes from him that which He feels jealous of, then that is from His mercy on him and His choosing him, even though there is difficulty in that. At times He prevents that which he dislikes and at times to purify him through means of affliction when He is jealous of that. So, when the slave does something which elicits jealousy, He shall punish him according to his sin.

It is as Abu al-Qasim has mentioned, "It is narrated from Sarri that he said, 'Once upon a time, I was seeking a truthful person (*siddiq*) when I passed by some mountains where I came across a group of people who were afflicted with trouble and were sick and blind. I asked them about their situation. They said that here is a man who comes out once a year, he supplicates for them and they are cured. I patiently remained until he came out and supplicated for them and they were cured. I followed his tracks, caught up with him and said to him, 'I have an inner illness, what is its cure?' He replied, 'Oh Sarri, leave me alone for indeed He is jealous and would not allow you to dwell with anything apart from Him as then you would fall from His eyes.'"

This is from the saying of He Most High, "*Do not set up any other deity along with Allah, otherwise you will sit condemned, forsaken,*" (17:22) and, "*So do not invoke any other god along with Allah, otherwise you will be among those who are to be punished.*" (26:213)

23] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*. Part 2, page 150:

For indeed, actual pleasure follows the attaining of that which is appropriately sought after; the actual pleasure is not the acquisition of that which is suitably sought after as some of the philosophers and people of creed (*kalam*) believe and the mentioning of which is predominant among the people of Tasawwuf and worship, and also predominant in the speech of the '*ulama* of *kalam* who are the people of scrutiny, theory and creed, and also in the speech of the people of spontaneity (*ahl-badiha*) who are the people of deliberation, need, proofs and eliciting proofs.

Each of these two matters have types and categories, some of which are true and some of which are false, all of them need to be looked at in view of the Book and the Sunnah for the best word is the Word of Allah and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad.

It is because of this that the *imams* of guidance from among those who spoke on knowledge and creed or in relation to actions, guidance and Tasawwuf would advise following the Book and the Sunnah and forbid that which departs from that as Allah and the Prophet ordered them. Their words in relation to this are much and widespread such as the speech of Sahl bin 'Abdullah al-Tustari: "Every rapture (*wajd*) that does not bear witness to the Book and the Sunnah is false."

24] He also mentions in the book *Al-Istiqamah*. Part 2, page 161:

For indeed intelligence at times denotes the inherent ability in a person with which he comprehends, and at times it denotes the actual comprehension, remembering and knowing.

The first is from the saying of Imam Ahmad and others predecessors: “Intelligence is natural disposition and wisdom is sagacity.” The second is from the saying of a group from among our companions and others: “Intelligence is a type of necessary knowledge.”

Both of them are correct for indeed intelligence in the heart is like vision in the eye which at times means the actual sense and at times the ability that Allah has placed in the eye with which information is acquired; surely each of them is from the knowledge of the slave and what he has discerned. In his knowledge and movement there is strength and each of them has power—there is no strength or power save with Allah (*la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*).

Because of this, you will find the upright *shaykhs* from among the Sufis advising the acquisition of knowledge and ordering the following of it just as you will find the upright people of knowledge advising the acting on knowledge and commanding that. This is because in each path there is a fear of abandoning what is necessary in the other.

25] Hafiz Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah also mentions in the book *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin*, page 281:

Surely, the lover takes delight from the mention of the beloved and His remaining in his heart without separating from Him. Indeed, He is his intimate friend and companion; he does not take delight from anyone aside from Him. He feels aversion from those who preoccupy him from Him.

Taqi al-Din bin Shaqir narrated to me. He said, “Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah one day left and I left behind him. When he reached the desert and were separate from people where no one could see him, I heard him recite the poem of a poet:

I come out from between the houses so that I may

Speak regarding you with the heart in secret and unhindered^[8]

26] Hafiz ‘Umar bin ‘Ali al-Bazzar writes in *Al-‘Alam al-‘Ulyah fi Manaqib Ibn Taymiyyah*, page 56, in the chapter regarding some of his miracles and insight:

More than one from the reliable individuals informed me of some of that which they witnessed from his miracles and I shall mention some of them in summary and begin with some of what I saw.

Among them is that there was between me and some erudite individuals disagreement in a number of issues and our debate in relation to them became prolonged. We began to shorten the discussion in each of the issue by saying we would refer to the *shaykh* and that which he gives preference to. Then, the *shaykh*, may Allah be pleased with him, came. When we intended to ask him regarding that, he began first and began mentioning to us each issue one after another as we did. He began mentioning the majority of what we had done in each issue and mentioned the views of the *‘ulama*. Then he gave preference to that which the proof supported until he arrived on the last of what we had intended to ask him and he clarified for us what we intended to do with him. My companion and I, and those who were with us were left speechless and wonderstruck by what appeared before us and what Allah had revealed to him from what was in our hearts.

Whenever in those days in which I remained in his company a question would occur to me, my heart had hardly stopped thinking about it that he would begin to mention it; he would mention the answer in many ways.

The *shaykh*, the pious, the reciter Ahmad bin al-Harimi narrated to me that he travelled to Damascus. “It so happened that when I got there I had no money at all and I did not know anyone from there. I began walking in its streets like a confused person when a *shaykh* came and hastily headed towards me. He made *salam* and behaved in a cheerful way with me. He put a purse in my hand in which there were some authentic *dirhams*. He then said to me, ‘Now, spend this and free your mind from that difficulty in which you are in for Allah shall not let you go to waste.’ He then returned on his tracks as if he had not come except for me. I prayed for him and became very happy with that. I said to some of the people who I saw, ‘Who is this *shaykh*?’ One said, ‘It’s as if you don’t know him, this is Ibn Taymiyyah.’ For a long time I never saw him cross this road. My main reason for travelling to Damascus was to meet him. I realised that Allah had revealed me and my situation to him. I did not need anyone after that during my stay in Damascus. Rather, Allah

opened up to me from where I had no inkling. I enquired about him after that and headed to visit him and make *salam* with him. He would treat me with dignity and ask about my condition and I would praise Allah Most High.

The *shaykh*, the *‘alim*, the reciter Taqi al-Din ‘Abdullah, son of the *shaykh*, the pious, the reciter Ahmad bin Sa‘id narrated to me. He said, “I travelled to Egypt when the *shaykh* was residing there. By chance I got there at night and I was feeling heavy and ill, and we dismounted in some places. I had hardly waited when I heard someone calling my name and teknonym. I answered and I was weak. A group of the *shaykh*’s companions, some of whom I had met in Damascus, entered on me. I said, ‘How did you know of my arrival and that I had came at this time?’ They mentioned, ‘The *shaykh* informed us that you had arrived and that you were ill. He ordered us to hurry in bringing you. We never saw anyone come and we didn’t say anything.’ I then knew this was from the miracles of the *shaykh*, may Allah be pleased with him.”

He also narrated to me: “I was ill in Damascus in such a severe illness that prevented me from even sitting. I couldn’t feel anything when the *shaykh* was suddenly by my head and I was feeling heavy with fever and illness. He called me and said, ‘Wellbeing (*‘afiyah*) has come.’ He had hardly left when I became well and was cured at that time.”

... He also narrated to me that Shaykh Ibn ‘Imad al-Din al-Muqri al-Mutarriz said: “I came to the *shaykh* had with me at that time some money for my expenses. I offered him my *salam* and he responded to me. He welcomed me and brought me close. He did not ask me whether I had money for my expenses? After some days my money finished and I wanted to leave his gathering after I had prayed with the people behind him. He forbade me and sat me close to him. When the gathering finished, he gave me a bunch of *dirhams* and said, ‘You’re now without money so make use of this and I was left surprised by this. I realised that Allah had revealed to him my condition at the first instance when I had money with me and at the end when it had ended and I was in need of money.”

A person who I do not doubt told me that the *shaykh*, may Allah be pleased with him, at the time that the Mongols descended on the Levant to take Damascus and other cities, its people trembled and were extremely fearful. A group then went to the *shaykh* and asked him to

supplicate for the Muslims and so he turned to Allah. He then said: "Listen to glad tidings. Surely, Allah will grant you victory on such a such day after the third when you will see heads on top of each other." He who had narrated to me said: "I swear be He in Whose hands is my life (or he swore like this), three days had only passed as he said when we saw their heads as the *shaykh* had said outskirts of Damascus loaded on top of each other."

The pious and god-fearing Shaykh 'Uthman bin Ahmad bin 'Isa al-Nassaj narrated to me that the *shaykh*, may Allah be pleased with him, used to visit the ill in hospital (*bemaristan*) in Damascus everyday. Hence, he once came according to his habit and visited them. He reached a young person from among them, supplicated for him and so he was cured very quickly. He came to the *shaykh* intending to do *salam*. When the *shaykh* saw him he greeted him in a cheerful way and drew him close. Then he gave him some money and said: "Allah has cured you, now promise to Allah that you shall hasten your return to your town. Can it be permissible to leave your wife and four daughters without any money and for you to reside here?" The young man said: "I kissed his hand and said master I repent to Allah on your hand. I was amazed at what he had revealed to me. I had left them without money and no one from Damascus knew of my situation."

Al-Bazzar, having narrated a number of miracles, writes:

I say that the miracles of the *shaykh*, may Allah be pleased with him, are very many. This short book is unsuitable of containing more than the amount mentioned here.

27] Hafiz 'Umar bin 'Ali al-Bazzar writes in *Al-'Alam al-'Ulyah fi Manaqib Ibn Taymiyyah*, page 73, in relation to the death of the Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him):

They said: Everyone heard of his death to a point that there was none left in Damascus who was able to attend his funeral prayer and intend to go but attended it and made themselves free for it; this occurred to an extent that the bazars of Damascus were shut and life stopped at that time. With his death people were in a state that preoccupied them from the majority of their matters and means of sustenance. The *emirs*, the leaders, the *'ulama*, the jurists, the Turks, the soldiers, men, women and children from the elite and common people all came out.

They said: As far as I know no one remained behind from the majority of people except three people who were famous for opposing him. They hid from people fearing for themselves as they were convinced that when they would go out people would stone them and kill them. He, may Allah have mercy on him, was washed and shrouded.

They said: Those who attended his washing from the elite and common people crowded round the left over water from his washing until each of them had taken a little amount.

Then his bier was taken out, people saw it and leaned towards it from every direction, each of them intending to acquire blessings (*tabarruk*) from it to an extent it was feared that the body may be crushed before reaching the grave...

A group of those who were present at that moment and saw the people and those who prayed over him agreed that they were over 50,000 in number. Those well versed in narrating and history said: "a funeral of this number was not heard of except the funeral of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, may Allah be pleased with him."

... That which was seen at his funeral was not seen at the funeral of anyone else in terms of respect, reverence, greatness, standing, people's honouring of it, respecting it, revering the individual, praising him on account of his knowledge, actions, asceticism, worship, turning away from the world, being preoccupied with the hereafter, poverty, giving preference to others (over himself), kindness, chivalry, patience, steadfastness, bravery, insight, to move ahead and come out openly with the truth, to show ruggedness to the enemies of Allah, the enemies of His Prophet and those who turn away from His religion, to aid Allah, His prophet, His religion and its people, to show humility to the friends of Allah, to lower his self to them, to show them generosity, nobility and reverence, to not take an interest in the world, its adornments, bounties and pleasures, and to show extreme eagerness for the hereafter and to constantly seek it to an extent that you would hear that and its like from men, women and children. All of them would praise him in relation to that which they knew of him.

They said: He was buried that day, may Allah be pleased with him and return over us his many blessings... The recitation of the Qur'an was completed (*khatam*) many times for him during the nights and days in many places the numbers of which cannot be recorded, especially in

Damascus which was under siege, Egypt, Iraq, Tabriz, Basra etc. to an extent that many people made reading for him their habit and volumes of the noble Qur'an (*al-rub'ah al-sharifah*) would be circulated among people to recite and gift its recitation to him.